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THE COUNTDOWN to the World Cup in South Africa has begun in earnest. But even with the finals only a matter of weeks away, it's impossible to predict who will make the respective final squads – hence we have only selected key men for our World Cup preview (part two with this issue). Even selecting those key men has been a tricky process; who would have thought that John Terry's position with England would suddenly appear so vulnerable?

The teams that looked good on paper when the draw was made in December are often very different to the sides that turn up in June. Most people have earmarked Spain and Brazil as the strongest contenders, but things can change very quickly.

Brazil were dismissed as also-rans in 2002 yet built momentum during the tournament while Argentina and France, the favourites before the finals, crashed out at the group stage.

Injuries are bound to take their toll over the next few weeks – it will be a miracle if England, with so many players involved in the final stages of the Champions League, arrive in South Africa unscathed. Similarly Spain, given Barcelona's intensive schedule, are also likely to suffer setbacks.

And then there are the "comeback kings", the players on who we turn the spotlight this month. They were not on the World Cup radar at the draw in December but they are creeping their way back into the public consciousness. In international football, experience and the mental toughness that comes with it, can prove the decisive factor between success and failure.

Next month, we feature part three of our World Cup guide. If you missed part one, you can obtain electronic copies at zinio.com/worldsoccer

EDWIN HAMILTON, Editor
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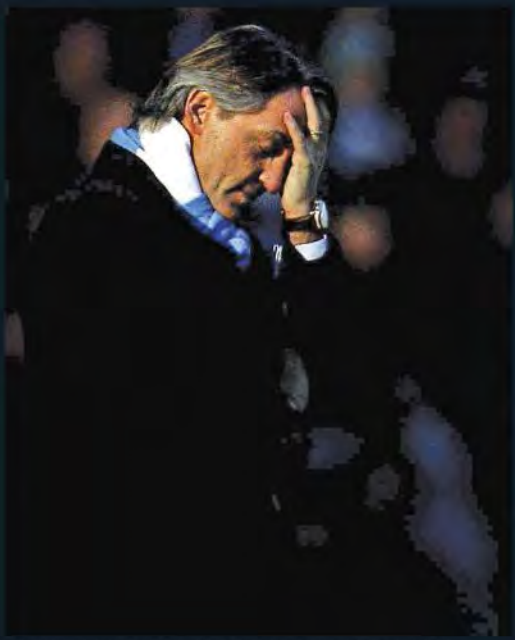
...IN PICTURES

The global game caught on camera

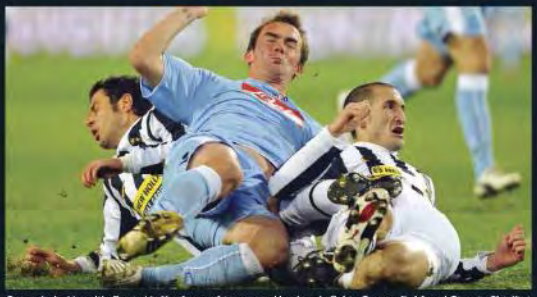
A nation mourns...the coffins of Togo assistant coach Amelete Abalo and media officer Stanislas Ocloo, both killed at the African Nations Cup, pass a guard of honour outside the Palais des Congres in Lome

Jump to it...Valencia's David Albelda, Nikola Zigic and Bruno Saltor (l to r) defend a free-kick

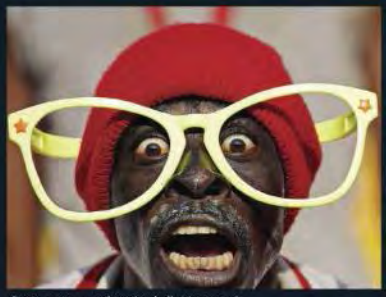
Splash...Lanus defender Santiago Hoyos dives in against Boca's Nicolas Gaitan



Blue gloom...manager Roberto Mancini begins to feel the pressure at Manchester City



Grounded...Napoli's Erwin Hoffer (centre) is stopped by Juve's Fabio Grosso (left) and Giorgio Chiellini



Specs-tator...watching football, African style

Up for it...Cameroon's Nicolas N'koulou (left) and Jacob Mulenga of Zambia go head-to-head in the African Nations Cup

Brian Glanville

...on John Terry's suitability for the England captaincy... CAF's shocking treatment of Togo...Arsenal's unravelling season...and praise for Trevor Brooking

Playing away...scandal-hit Terry (left) and his former Chelsea team-mate Bridge

QUESTIONS BEGGED while you wait. Such, it seems to me, is the essence of the recent, somewhat sordid, John Terry affair. Why, for example, given his frenetic track record, was he ever made England captain in the first place?

Stripping naked in a Heathrow Airport bar, together with other Chelsea colleagues, and jeering at appalled American travellers, on the very day of 9/11. Publicly urinating in a hostelry. Involved, it seems, in numerous affairs, even though in a supposedly stable relationship with his wife. Son of a mother arrested for shoplifting and a father accused of dealing in cocaine.

None of these hanging offences, but surely indications that he'd hardly make a suitable figurehead for the national team.

So, indeed and alas, it has proved; the latest, disastrous situation exacerbated by Terry's attempt to injunct the publication of details of his latest escapade: an affair with the former girlfriend of his England and ex-Chelsea colleague Wayne Bridge. Note the word former, sometimes surprisingly omitted from published accounts of the adultery; a fact that scarcely exonerates Terry's behaviour but surely mitigates the charges,

> "Terry made things much worse by trying to gag any revelation of the scandal"

though it seems hardly likely to have assuaged the wrath and resentment of Bridge himself.

Certainly, Terry has made things much worse by trying, and at first succeeding, to place a legal gag on any revelation of the scandal. You might even say that in so doing, and so failing, he has unwittingly rendered a great legal service to the media now that his gagging attempt has been scornfully thrown out by a wise appeal judge who observed, damningly, that what motivated Terry was nothing other than an attempt to safeguard his many lucrative commercial contracts.

Next begged question: however much being the England captain may have mattered to Terry, with central reference to the prestige and the wealth it brought him, is it of real importance in itself? I would suggest that it isn't. Football, after all, isn't cricket. There the team captain is a centrally important figure, especially when his team is fielding, looking after the positioning of his field, ringing the changes on his bowlers. Broadly speaking today's football captains are overshadowed by their teams' managers, who continue to exert influence from the dugout during the game. The captain on the field tosses up, of course, and chooses an end from which to play, but overall his function is nominal.

It is very hard to think even of an exception to prove the rule, and so far as British football is concerned I can think only of one: Danny Blanchflower, when, in the 1950s, he skippered Spurs and Northern Ireland from right-half.

Danny was a rare bird among pro footballers of the time, his high intelligence transcending the narrower intelligence of such later, creative talents as Paul Gascoigne – phenomenal on the ball, a birdbrain off the field.

How well I remember Danny telling me the tale of what happened in the Tottenham dressing room before the 1963 European Cup-winners Cup Final in Rotterdam against Atletico Madrid. Bill Nicholson, that dour Yorkshireman, though unquestionably a notable tactician, ran through the opposing team one by one with great admiration. Each player, in his view, was exceptional, not least the black outside-right, Miguel Jones.

Danny watched with alarm as the heads of his own players went steadily down, and when Bill had finished he gave what might be described as an "anti-team talk" eulogising his own men: "They may have a Jones who is quick but we've got one of our own who can motor; in Cliff Jones." The heads gradually went up again.

Tottenham went out to win the match, 5-1.

HOW outrageous that the African confederation should both fine and suspend Togo for pulling out of the recent African Nations Cup after their team coach had been so brutally assailed and two of their party

killed. To give the players their due, they wanted to play on but their own federation quite understandably recalled them. Now it must pay a £30,000 fine while the team is banned for the next two tournaments.

Surely the African confederation itself was seriously to blame for what so horrifically happened to the Togo squad in an area all too well-known for its guerrilla activity. True, when several matches were played there later on, no such violence was repeated, but what kind of consolation was that?

Emmanuel Adebayor had every right to protest against such draconian and unmerited punishment.

Whether the tournament should have been staged in such a tormented country as Angola at all remains a demanding question.

AT the Emirates, one saw Manchester United rip holes in a vulnerable Arsenal team which seemed, in the image of its deeply respected manager, to get things horribly wrong.

Well taken as they were, each of the three United goals was a major embarrassment; doubly so in the case of the first one, when Nani on the right flank looked like a cross between Ronaldo and Garrincha.

Previously, in the FA Cup at Stoke, a match Arsene Wenger simply threw away with his bizarre amalgam of untried youngsters and ageing veterans (though the 35-year-old Sol Campbell, thrown to the muscular Stoke wolves, did well enough), the Polish substitute keeper, Lukasz Fabianski, ineptly gave away a goal in 70 seconds, culpably hesitant in dealing with one of those enormous throws by Rory Delap.

After that defeat, Wenger blithely and riskily announced: "We've forgotten about Stoke already. I don't even know we played at Stoke." Well, broadly speaking, they didn't. But having thrown away the FA Cup's possibilities, though he has won it four times in his imposing career, he has now plainly seen the Premier League disappear over the horizon.

Against United, his tactics somewhat baffled me. Where United had such a sparkling right-winger in Nani, Arsenal for most of the game had none at all. Notionally one assumed it should have been the Czech international Tomas Rosicky, but this talented player has never been a right-winger as opposed to a highly creative midfielder, and he constantly wandered off the wing.

All too late did that natural right-winger Theo Walcott appear. Even if he has been gradually feeling his way back to fitness, his earlier choice would have made far more tactical sense.

TO end, a hearty salute to Trevor Brooking, who seems to have driven the final nail into the coffin of Charlie "Long Ball" Hughes' insidious theories, which for years corrupted the FA coaching establishment, under the fatuously benign gaze of the chief executive, Graham "The Jelly" Kelly.

Hughes made a pseudo science of his mistaken theories, evidently unaware, as a formerly obscure schoolmaster, of the words of scientific philosopher Karl Popper that there cannot be a scientific theory which can't be disproved. There was nothing new about Hughes' heresy; wing commander Charles Reep, in the 1950s, had invented something he called "match analysis", which strove to prove the long-ball game was the way.

But for Brooking, now FA director of football development, "the long ball game has got to become a thing of the past". He says: "We have to get them playing the way Brazil and Spain

Long overdue...Brooking

play, with more intricate passing".

Reep, in fact, became a consultant to Graham Taylor, whose long-ball tactics with Watford catapulted them from the Fourth Division to second position in the First. Ultimately, he would discard Reep and become famously touchy about any criticism of his tactics, which threatened to subvert the English game.

When Taylor was inexplicably made manger of England, results were poor and they failed to qualify for the 1994 World Cup. Fatuous concepts, such as POMO (the so-called Position of Maximum Opportunity) found disciples in the FA coaching scheme. And indeed, historically, there has always been a tendency in English football to resort to long-ball tactics.

Brooking, a fine creative player in his day and, as he briefly illustrated at his old club West Ham, no mean manager, has struck a blow for decent football and common sense. ●

GOALS
WE'D LIKE TO SEE AGAIN...

Volley...Borriello

1 Marco Borriello, Milan v Siena
Meets a chip into the box with an angled left-foot volley from the corner of the six-yard area

2 Seydou Keita, Mali v Malawi
Piledriver of a free-kick from 30 yards that flies into the top corner

3 Xavi, Barcelona v Real Valladolid
Begins the move with a dummy before continuing his run and volleying home from seven yards

4 Christian Maggio, Napoli v Livorno
A perfectly executed volley into the top corner

5 Luis Orozco, Leon v Merida
A looping left-foot shot high over the goalkeeper from just inside his own half

6 Stefano Okaka, Roma v Siena
A sublime backheel from the striker

Dummy...Xavi

AND ONE THAT GOT AWAY...

Solo run...fan Mulyadi takes the game to Oman on his own

Hendri Mulyadi, Indonesia v Oman
A fan frustrated by his team in their Asian Cup defeat to Oman, took matters into his own hands and tried to show them how it should be done

To see clips of these goals, visit www.worldsoccer.com

NUMBERS GAME

£719million
total debts of Manchester United as a result of the Glazer family's ownership of the club since 2005

20
members of the Haitian federation staff feared dead after their HQ collapsed in the recent earthquake

42,115
the average attendance at games in the first half of the Bundesliga season, a five per cent increase on the same period last term

£52,000
the annual salary accepted by Egyptian striker Mido for his loan spell at West Ham United

€575,000
the bonus for each Real Madrid player if they win the club's 10th European Cup in May

4
owners this season of Premier League strugglers Portsmouth after Hong Kong businessman Balram Chainrai bought a controlling interest from Ali Al Faraj

£30million
spent during the January transfer window by Premier League clubs, a huge fall on the £190m spent 12 months previously

REPORTS we couldn't make up

CLAUDE'S NEW ROLE

Claude Anelka, the elder brother of Chelsea striker Nicolas, has been appointed head coach of AC St Louis, a side in the recently relaunched North American Soccer League. Anelka had a brief but unsuccessful spell in charge of Raith Rovers in 2004.

GATTUSO'S CATCH OF THE DAY

Milan and Italy midfielder Gennaro Gattuso has fulfilled a lifelong ambition by opening a restaurant and fishmongers in Gallarate, his home town for the past eight years.

"Someone might even smile at it, but this fish store is a dream come true for me," said Gattuso at the shop's opening, which was attended by team-mates Ronaldinho and David Beckham.

"I wanted to become a fisherman when I was a child, but life's events have later driven me in different directions."

Come dine with me...Gattuso

Troubled...Aguiar

AGUIAR DETAINED

Guma Aguiar, the controversial Brazil-born businessman who has pumped millions of pounds into top Israeli club Beitar Jerusalem, has been detained at a psychiatric hospital in Tel Aviv after his family became increasingly concerned at his erratic behaviour.

Last June the 32-year-old Brazilian-American was arrested and fined in Florida for possessing marijuana.

RUMOURS we'd like to believe

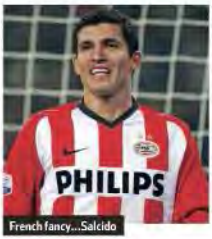
Milan target...Nilmar

Real Madrid house paper *Marca* is suggesting the galacticos hope to enroll Almeria keeper Diego Alves as the understudy to Iker Casillas. The cost? A cool £15million.

According to Spanish radio station Cadena Ser, Villarreal's Brazilian striker Nilmar is mulling over a summer move to Milan, where he will replace Dutch striker Klaas-Jan Huntelaar. Nilmar, whose current contract runs to 2014, is also being tracked by Sao Paulo and Santos.

Struggling in Ligue 1 this term, Paris Saint-Germain require new blood a plenty and *L'Equipe* says it has good reason to believe that one of the fresh faces will be PSV Eindhoven's versatile Mexican defender Carlos Salcido. PSG also like the look of Premier League misfits Ryan Babel of Liverpool and Manchester United's Anderson.

According to *Gazzetta dello Sport*, Roma have been linked with Palermo's Brazilian midfielder Fabio Simplicio. The same source also has them hot for Tottenham's Russian striker Roman Pavlyuchenko.



French fancy...Salcido

Paul Gardner

Tragedy at the heart of football

SOME TERRIBLE things have been happening in the game recently and I feel it is right to make mention of some of them, lest they get buried in the ongoing carnival that is world football.

Firstly, going back a few months to a court case in South Africa, three men were on trial for the murder of Eudy Simelane, who was a former member of the South Africa women's national team. You would think, with all the publicity that South Africa and its World Cup have been getting, that this would have been at least noticed.

However, it was barely reported. Could it be because Simelane was gay and lived her lesbian life openly?

She was allegedly gang-raped and then repeatedly stabbed, yet not a word was heard from FIFA, the big champions of South Africa. A shameful silence indeed.

For Eudy Simelane, left to die, half naked, in a field near her home, there is no comeback. For other victims – who have been the beneficiaries of the marvels of modern medicine – there is the possibility of a return to playing, but always with a huge question mark hovering. Will a brush with tragedy, maybe even a close escape from death, affect a player's performance?

The tragedy does not have to be soccer related. Just think of the nightmare that Diego Buonanotte must be living right now. Hailed as Argentina's next superstar, the 21-year old River Plate player was involved in a deadly car crash in December.

Buonanotte was the driver, he lost control at speed and hit a tree. He suffered multiple injuries and is likely to be – as the reports say, making the assumption that he will resume his career – out of action for all of 2010.

But even if Buonanotte recovers from the physical damage, will he be able to escape the mental trauma of knowing that he was responsible for the deaths of three of his friends in the accident? Of course he will get help – quite a lot, from the sound of it – with River Plate club doctor Horacio Cavaliere promising: "We will supply a group of psychiatrists and psychologists to help him."

Fatal...Buonanotte (inset) survived the crash in which three friends died

"Maybe the true cost of violent play could be assessed and stricter control exercised by referees"

The USA striker Charlie Davies was also hurt in a fatal car accident in October – with the crucial difference that he was not the driver. Davies is determined to get himself fit for the World Cup, despite the prognosis that foresaw a year's recovery time. Davies, of course, means getting physically fit. But mentally...who knows?

Then, beyond any attempt to make sense of it, comes the harrowing case of Paraguay striker Salvador Cabanas, who was shot in the head from close range in a Mexico City bar, apparently after a squabble about football. His chances of playing again do not look too good.

I have been watching Arsenal's Eduardo, one who did make it back. Is he now "fully recovered" from his horrendous leg injury? I use quotation marks because I'm in some doubt whether this is the same goalscoring Eduardo we saw before the injury.

Is something missing? Has a very understandable fear crept into Eduardo's game – a minuscule hesitation to challenge or to resist a challenge, perhaps, but something crucial enough to take the edge off his performance?

This is a field in which, as far as I know, no research has been done. Obviously, the fear factor is not something that can be measured, but we can accumulate stats. I've heard the phrase "he was never the same player again" often enough. But it would be useful to know how many such cases there are. Maybe then the true cost of violent play could be assessed and a much stricter control of it exercised by referees.

I worry that if it's violent play causing the injuries, the players on the receiving end are likely to be forwards or creative midfielders. Again, I know of no stats that would support that notion, or contradict it, but the stat that would matter here would be how many of those players returned to full activity.

Of course, it can be done. Diego Maradona is the prime example, recovering from an ankle-shattering tackle in 1983 by Andoni Goikoetxea in Spain, he turned in one of the most memorable performances in World Cup history in 1986. However, we know much less about the players whose careers are effectively ended.

I'm not talking about the players who are forced – like Marco Van Basten – to quit the game because their bodies can no longer respond. There does not even have to be a violent incident. The return to action of Barcelona's Argentinian defender Gabriel Milito underlines the point. He has been out of action for nearly two years after twisting his knee in a game. Can he return to his pre-injury form, or will the fear of another knee injury blunt his sharpness?

Milito's case seems central to me because it involves the knee, the footballer's most vulnerable feature. From back in the days when the mere word "cartilage" carried with it the threat of a career cut short, to today's surgical miracles, the knee is where the fears are centred.

It is the unmeasurable fear factor that may well determine the players who are "never the same again". ●

Jim Holden

African show was right to continue

THE WORLD OF football made the right choice in response to the horrific terrorist gun attack on the Togo team bus a few days before the start of the African Nations Cup. It decided the show must go on. It decided that a prestige football tournament should be played even as the goalkeeper of the Togo team lay seriously wounded in hospital. This was how it had to be.

Two officials of the Togo team were killed in the attack, along with the driver of the bus, while players such as Emmanuel Adebayor of Manchester City were left brutally shocked.

Yet there were few voices demanding that the tournament be abandoned. Instead, a wider resolve swiftly grew that the best policy was to continue with the matches and the competition.

That was evident not just in the host nation Angola and the continent of Africa – which also has the honour of hosting this year's World Cup – it was also the case across Europe, where most of the African professionals play their club football, and where there has been long-term hostility to the timing of this biennial tournament.

Modern football clubs, in wealthy nations, need little excuse or reason to be motivated by purely selfish interests. This time, however, only a handful in Italy and England talked about the pressing need to bring their players home to safety. Most clubs, to their credit, did not. The immediate reaction of the majority was to behave responsibly and declare their faith in decisions made by the organisers of the tournament

Most understood the practical, political and emotional necessity that life must continue as normally as possible in the wake of a terrorist atrocity. And this applies to football, and to all of sport, as much as it does in any other walk of life.

What terrorists try to create is fear. The best weapon against them is not to be fearful, however hard that may be.

The African Nations Cup did exactly that. The African Nations Cup refused to be cowed by the gunmen. The African Nations Cup refused to switch matches away from the troubled province of Cabinda – where the fatal shootings occurred – and the exclave for which this terrorist group wants to gain secession from the state of Angola

Some argued that the attack proved Angola was an inappropriate place to hold an international sports event. Right or wrong, that is a different matter, a different question.

The unfortunate and plain truth is that terrorism can happen anywhere on Earth in the 21st century.

Home safely...Emmanuel Adebayor (right) at a Togo team meeting in Lome

"Only a handful of clubs in Italy and England talked about the pressing need to bring their players home to safety. Most, to their credit, did not"

Bag searches, X-ray scanners and massive security operations are a fact of life at all major sports events, in nations rich and poor, large and small. We accept their intrusion because we don't want sport to be stopped by fear.

Important words

In the wake of the Togo attack there was an eloquent and intelligent response from Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger. They were important words.

"I don't like the culture of fear, I hate that," Wenger said, when asked if the competition should be cancelled.

"When people say it should be stopped, is it a real issue over security, or is it just being selfish?

"Here in Europe, we are not in the best position to judge security matters. We won't be asking FIFA to release our players. I don't believe you can stop a competition for any incident – because that would be a reward. It would mean any competition could be stopped at any time."

Exactly. If a sports event were to be unnecessarily abandoned in fear of terrorism, the consequence would be to make many more sports events potential targets.

The wider world of sport is facing up to this. Fifteen months ago the England cricket team continued a tour of India in the aftermath of the monstrous Mumbai hotel massacres.

In the wake of the gun attack on their bus, the Togo team withdrew from the Nations Cup. This was wholly understandable and reasonable. Yet within their squad many of the footballers wanted to remain at the event and to play in honour of those who lost their lives.

The emotional response of individuals will vary and each person has to make their own choice. No sportsman must ever be forced onto the field of play against their will.

But sport, and football, as the world's favourite game, must have a general policy to deal with incidents of terrorism. And this must surely be that the game does not buckle, that it does not abandon itself to fear.

In a World Cup year, this must be understood and accepted everywhere as the legacy of how football came to terms with the horror of the gun attack on the Togo team bus. ●

HEROES...

AMIN MOTEVASELZADEH

The Moghavemat Sepasi striker collided with the opposition goalkeeper but kicked the ball into touch rather than take advantage of an open goal in an Iranian league game.

Goal getter...Gedo

GEDO

The 26-year-old Egyptian Mohamed Nagy was virtually unknown before the African Nations Cup in Angola, but he finished as the tournament's top scorer and grabbed his country's winner in the Final.

WAYNE ROONEY

On fire for Manchester United, passing the milestone of 100 Premier League goals. On course to win the ESM Golden Shoe as the continent's top goalscorer.

Looking good...Rooney

& VILLAINS

Dopey...Mutu

CHELSEA & FULHAM

The day after Championship club Crystal Palace were placed in administration, the Premier League clubs were reported to have made "courtesy calls" to 14- and 15-year-olds at Palace's academy.

CAF

The African confederation attracted ridicule for banning Togo for the next two African Nations Cup tournaments as punishment for leaving Angola following the gunfire attack on their team bus.

ADRIAN MUTU

The Fiorentina and Romania forward faces a lengthy ban from football after testing positive for Sibutramine, an anti-obesity drug.

BLATTERWATCH

Keeping tabs on the FIFA president

A BUSY month for Joseph S. There were visits to Russia and Spain, where he hinted that he was in favour of limited use of video replays and suggested that the 2018 World Cup bidding process might be confined to Europe.

Blatter also found time to write a letter to FIFA vice-president Jack Warner on the occasion of Warner's election as chairman of the United National Congress, Trinidad's main opposition party.

"Dear friend Jack," Blatter wrote. *"Your election is a vibrant testimony of your brilliant career."*

Just in case anyone missed Blatter's eulogy to his FIFA colleague, Warner took the trouble of sending journalists a copy of the letter, along with a press release headed "FIFA congratulates Jack Warner".

Congratulations...Warner

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Hassan Shehata
African football's most successful coach

EGYPT

HASSAN SHEHATA is an enigmatic figure. He is a coach who has rewritten the record books for African football, yet one whose thoughts and philosophies on the game remain a mystery.

The 60-year-old Egyptian consistently shuts himself away in a cocoon of silence, shunning press conferences and giving glib answers when he is questioned. But judged by deeds rather than words, Shehata is the most successful coach in the history of African football.

He has been in charge of his country's national side for the last three African Nations Cup finals, taken them to all three titles and has never lost a game in the tournament. And he believes the current Pharaohs side is the finest he has produced.

"The best generation," Shehata concurred in a rare exchange after winning the title in Luanda. "Teamwork, family," he splutters in answer to questions about the recipe for success, mixing in the pious platitudes common among Arabic speakers.

His players say his tough demeanour belies an engaging personality who has embraced the idea of moulding his side into a band of brothers with a common cause.

For that reason, mavericks like Ahmed "Mido" Hossam and Mohamed Zidan have a fractured relationship with Shehata, himself a former Egypt international who played at three African Nations Cup tournaments but without success.

Zidan has not necessarily embraced the religious dictates of the Egypt side, but he has agreed to join in prayer and reflection when asked. Mido's absence from the side over the last years has as much to do with his playboy lifestyle as his recent poor form.

Shehata has been blessed with a strong pool of talent to pick from, but the steady hand guiding the experienced Egyptians through some choppy waters has been his outstanding feature.

At the African Nations Cup finals in Angola he also proved master of the timely substitution. His latest find, Mohamed "Gedo" Nagy, emerged as top scorer in the tournament with five goals – all of which were scored after he came off the bench, including the winner in the Final against Ghana just when Egypt's ageing side looked to be tiring at the business end of a logistically-challenging tournament.

Shehata will have to live with the failure of missing out on the World Cup, a jinx that has now haunted Egypt for two decades, but despite that blight his place in the continent's hall of fame has been secured.

Mark Gleeson

Silent...Shehata is a man of few words

The ego has landed...Robinho arrives at Santos' Vila Belmiro stadium with Pele (above right)

Robinho
Back at Santos after European misadventure

BRAZIL

"I REALLY EXPECTED Robinho to become the best player in the world," said former Santos winger Edu. "But, unfortunately, along with a lot of people, I was wrong. He's coming back to Brazilian football at a moment when his prestige is low."

Even so, there was a warm welcome for him back at Santos, where he made his name between 2002 and 2005. Most fans seem pleased to have him back and are prepared to forgive the sulk act – by now well known to Europeans – that he threw in order to force the club to sell him to Real Madrid.

His six-month loan to Santos would clearly seem to be a bid to increase his visibility in the run-up to this summer's World Cup, but he is just one of the big names that have returned to Brazil recently – along with Ronaldo, Adriano and Fred, the *Selecao*'s entire strike force from the 2006 World Cup is now back in Brazil.

Some positive trends are clearly contributing to this movement, with the clubs' marketing departments becoming increasingly professional in bringing sponsors on board to pay the wages of star players. With the currency strong, the economy growing and the clubs offering a connection to the country's huge internal market, deals of this type have become viable.

But there is a downside to the return of Robinho. High profile Sao Paulo director Marco Aurelio Cunha points out that the comeback deals are either "a short term strategy or an option at the end of a career". For the foreseeable future the movement will still be in the other direction, with Brazilian players joining European clubs. And in this light, the problems Robinho has experienced establishing himself in Europe – and the immature way in which he appears to have handled them – are a cause for concern. This latest case of an expensive Brazilian acquisition seemingly unwilling to fight for his first-team place will surely make the Europeans more wary of parting with their money when they cast their eye on the country's young prospects, and with good reason.

"Lots of Brazilian players can't cope with the difficulties they face abroad," says Vasco da Gama director Rodrigo Caetano. "After a year they're itching to come back – because of the World Cup, or problems of adaptation. This is bad for the market. After all, our clubs need to sell to survive. We need to re-educate our young players, and prepare them properly for the move abroad."

Tim Vickery

Poisoned chalice...Klaus

Bubble burst...Champagne

Jerome Champagne & Hans Klaus
Senior heads roll at FIFA

SWITZERLAND

THE REVOLVING DOOR at FIFA House is swinging at hurricane speed as Jerome Champagne resigned as director of international relations just two months after Hans Klaus quit as communications director.

Frenchman Champagne, a former career diplomat, had been considered something of a loose cannon within FIFA.

He had served as diplomatic adviser to president Sepp Blatter, as deputy general secretary, and, latterly, with responsibility for guiding negotiations with the European Commission over the controversial 6+5 doctrine.

The "floating" nature of Champagne's role within FIFA had led to concerns from some confederations that he was overstepping his remit. However, speculation that he might have been plotting to stand against Blatter for the presidency seems to have been wide of the mark.

At least he lasted longer than Klaus, who had been "imported" from Japan Tobacco in May 2008 as director of communications. Klaus resigned in December 2009 after having been reported absent from the World Cup draw in Cape Town on the grounds of flu.

A Chelsea fan, Klaus had no previous executive experience in sport. His brief was to expand Blatter's strategy to promote football as a worldwide force for social, educational and medical change. Ultimately he was undermined by his own lack of knowledge and understanding of the levers of football (and FIFA) power.

The role of communications director seems to be a poisoned chalice. Klaus was the third to go in seven years, after Keith Cooper and then Markus Siegler. In 2008, FIFA, also "lost" long-serving media spokesman Andreas Herren, who has since put his insider knowledge at the service of Russia's World Cup bid.

Of course, everyone went through the door with the good grace which betokens an agreed financial farewell.

In a statement released by FIFA, Champagne said that he wished "to thank Joseph S Blatter for the real privilege of having been able to serve the world of football over the years, all in the noble cause of helping to build a better world".

Klaus claimed his involvement "has been a great experience and definitely a valuable enrichment for my professional career to work for FIFA over the past two years. FIFA is a fascinating organisation in the fascinating world of football".

While their departures may have strengthened the position of general secretary Jerome Valcke, this may be only temporary.

Valcke has emerged in an increasingly up-front role as he leads the 2010 World Cup preparations, though this may not serve him well in the long run. Blatter is wary about anyone establishing too strong a power base of their own within FIFA House. As a former general secretary, he should know.

In the meantime, head of media Nicolas Maingot has been appointed as acting FIFA director of communications and public affairs, while deputy head of media Pekka Odriozola has stepped up as acting head of media.

Keir Radnedge

Seth Stammler
MLS star's charity helps Haiti earthquake victims

UNITED STATES

NEW YORK RED BULLS midfielder Seth Stammler had particular reason to be concerned by the recent tragic events following the earthquake in Haiti.

Three years ago Stammler founded the Sporting Chance Foundation, a charity that provides clean water and educational opportunities for children in Haiti.

Stammler was desperately trying to make contact with Haiti and eventually received a text from his colleague Gerald Oriol.

"Gerald is a big part of our efforts at the Foundation," said Stammler. "Without him, we'd have to start back at square one. So we are definitely thankful he made it and is going to be working with us."

Stammler also learned that the well built by the foundation was working and providing water for the quake survivors.

"We just finished it in September," he said. "They started using it in October and three months later they have a tragic earthquake. It survived.

"It's definitely a proud thing for the Sporting Chance Foundation. I think it re-energises us to do more wells. They're kind of costly, but I think it just proves the importance they have in the community."

John Holmesdale

Passing on his support...Stammler's charity has supplied water in Haiti

Salvador Cabanas
Paraguay striker critical after nightclub shooting

MEXICO

National hero...Cabanas celebrates scoring a penalty against Bolivia

PARAGUAY'S Salvador Cabanas was in a critical condition after being shot in the head in a nightclub in Mexico City.

The Club America striker, who has won 44 caps for Paraguay and was linked with a January move to Sunderland, was with his wife and brother-in-law at the Bar Bar club when he was attacked at six in the morning.

Club America president Michel Bauer said he believed the attack to have been unprovoked. "He arrived conscious and responded well to the questions they asked him as he was going into hospital," Bauer said.

"They wanted to assault him. I can confirm that is what his wife has said, that it was an assault. There was no shoot-out nor any quarrel."

Two suspects, who were captured on a security camera walking out of the toilet where Cabanas was found, have been arrested.

One of the suspects was named as Jose Balderas Garza, nicknamed *El Modelo* (the model) and a regular at the Bar Bar, a popular haunt for footballers and other celebrities. He is reportedly from Sinaloa, a state in Mexico renowned for its drug traffickers.

John Holmesdale

Keir Radnedge

London calling for Oz bid?

Here's a tongue-in-cheek suggestion for Australia's troubled World Cup campaign

AUSTRALIA'S BID to host the World Cup in 2018 or 2022 is looking more and more problematic. But how about this as the ideal solution to put the show back on the main road towards decision day next December: billionaire Football Federation Australia chairman Frank Lowy might consider staging the opening match and Final at Wembley.

Just as FIFA insiders talk of an "African solution" regarding 2010, albeit less freely now than before, a revolutionary "English solution" would guarantee worldwide headlines and fall in line with the Australians' new bidding strategy.

London sport and communications consultancy Square1 Sports has been contracted to bolster the "advocacy team and help build the international profile of the bid", while Joanna Burns, a founding partner of UK consultancy Alexander Ross, has been named "to manage overseas events and coordinate the international communications and relations aspects of the bid from London".

> **An 'English solution' would guarantee headlines**

Almost too late the Australians have realised that much politicking within FIFA is Euro-centred and they have been missing out. Thus they were slow to deal with the controversial issue of stadia-sharing, with other Australian sports resisting the concept of a month-long shutdown in their own regular seasons to accommodate what is a rival for sporting attention.

Inside track

Failing to nail the inside track with FIFA is not a failing of which the Russians can be accused. Twice already FIFA president Sepp Blatter has been welcomed to Moscow – first by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin last October and, most recently, by President Dmitry Medvedev while attending a pre-season tournament.

The Russians were also among the swarm of bidders in Angola at the closing stages of the African Nations Cup and touching base with FIFA executive members at the African confederation's congress in Luanda.

Joining their bid advisers is Vyacheslav Koloskov – for years the former Soviet Union's FIFA vice-president – as well as Markus Siegler, a former FIFA director of communications. The Russians' communications strategy is already being led by Andreas Herren, who was for years himself a senior fixture in FIFA's media department.

All of this suggests that pressures are gathering, better late than never maybe, to award 2018 to Europe, even though UEFA has yet to unveil a formal lobbying strategy of its own on behalf of its bidders.

That would leave 2022 at the bidding mercy of Australia, the United States, the semi-committed Indonesia, Japan and South Korea, plus the intriguing outsiders from Qatar.

No one could accuse the Qataris of a lack of commitment. They have been busy bringing more ambassadors on board, notably Bora Milutinovic.

The ultimate "citizen of the World Cup", Milutinovic, who is now 65, has coached a record five different nations at the finals: Mexico as hosts in 1986, Costa Rica in 1990, USA as hosts in 1994, Nigeria in 1998 and China in 2002. He has also bossed Al Sadd in Qatar and – at short notice – Iraq in the Confederations Cup in South Africa last summer.

They could provide very awkward opposition, and that's why it struck me that the Australians might opt for an "English solution" – the new Wembley was, after all, designed and built by an Australian company. ●

Shock tactic....could Australia's World Cup bid be boosted by proposing to stage a couple of games at Wembley?

Read more from Ken Radnedge at worldsoccer.com

Critical...Hoeness has condemned the selection of South Africa as World Cup hosts

South Africans take aim at Hoeness

JEROME VALCKE, FIFA's general secretary who carries the brunt of driving the 2010 World Cup project, has been increasingly irritated by what he considers unbalanced criticism from Germany and England.

Not that this has silenced continued expressions of concern. The latest comes from Bayern Munich's newly installed president, Uli Hoeness, whose view is in direct contrast to predecessor Franz Beckenbauer.

Hoeness described the selection of South Africa as host nation as "one of the greatest mistakes" perpetrated by FIFA president Sepp Blatter.

He added: "I won't be going. I was never a great supporter of a World Cup in South Africa or, indeed, anywhere on the African continent. I have always been of this opinion but it's no use crying any more. Everyone just has to make the best of it."

South Africa's ambassador to Germany, Sonwabo Eddie Funde, wrote formally in protest to Hoeness. Funde insisted South Africa would take all necessary precautions to ensure that the World Cup went off peacefully and claimed that no such reasons existed for anything similar to the Togo team tragedy.

He added: "I remember a press conference of your own in Dortmund in 2006 when you complained about what you felt to be unfair criticism of FC Bayern. Now you know how we feel in South Africa when we hear such comments from important football personalities such as yourself."

Olympic future for West Ham

PERHAPS there is a Premier League future after all for the London 2012 Olympic Stadium. That would come as a great relief to Jacques Rogge, president of the International Olympic Committee, who is sensitive to accusations of the Games' "white elephant legacies".

David Sullivan, the new co-owner of West Ham United, is hoping to move the east London club from Upton Park after the 2012 Games. Lifelong Hammers fan Sullivan acquired 50 per cent of the club in a deal which values West Ham at £105million. Icelandic bank Straumur continues to hold the remaining half. David Gold joins as joint chairman, with Karren Brady as vice-chairman. This is, in effect, the directorial team who brought Birmingham City back up among the elite.

Sullivan said: "It is nice to get the club back in the hands of east Londoners and these are exciting times. We hope to persuade the government to let us move into the new Olympic Stadium and I believe the people of east London would support that move."

London 2012 organisers say West Ham would have to keep the stadium's running track. London mayor Boris Johnson has been keen for a football club to take over the running costs of the stadium, but the decision has to be taken by the Olympic Park Legacy Company.

West Ham have debts of more than £100m after the disruptive and near-disastrous Icelandic ownership experience and Sullivan believes the club's future would be brighter if they could move to the Olympic Stadium.

He said: "There may be a way around the running-track issue. Maybe we could lay the track for three months or something. Maybe we could use retractable seating. It can't be comprehended how a government can build a huge ground, then reduce its capacity and use it only occasionally for athletics. There's a precedent with Manchester City and the Commonwealth Games stadium. Look at what's happened there."

Indeed.

Home truths...new owners Gold (left) and Sullivan

35 biggest January

Manchester United are believed to have paid a fee of around £10m, which could rise to as much as £14m, for the 20-year-old defender who was playing for non-league Maidstone United less than two years ago. He was immediately loaned back to Fulham for the remainder of this season.

£10MILLION
1 Chris Smalling
Fulham to Manchester United

£8M
2 Keisuke Honda,
VVV Venlo to CSKA Moscow

£6.98M
3= Adem Ljajic
Partizan Belgrade to Fiorentina

£6.98M
3= Dejan Lovren
Dinamo Zagreb to Lyon

£6.98M
3= Eduardo Salvio
Lanus to Atletico Madrid

£3.6M
12 Scott McDonald
Celtic to Middlesbrough

£3.5M
13 Mario Bolatti
Porto to Fiorentina

£3.4M
14 Nicolas Lodeiro
Nacional to Ajax

£3.3M
15 Andrea Dossena
Liverpool to Napoli

£3.25M
16 Asmir Begovic
Portsmouth to Stoke City

£3.05M
17 Gokhan Unal
Trabzonspor to Fenerbahce

£2.5M
24 Victor Moses
Crystal Palace to Wigan Athetic

£2.25M
25 Benni McCarthy
Blackburn Rovers to West Ham United

£2.18M
26= Alan Kardec
Vasco da Gama to Benfica

£2.18M
26= McDonald Mariga Parma to Internazionale

£2M
28 Matthew Kilgallon Sheffield United to Sunderland

£1.9M
29 Andriy Voronin
Liverpool to Dynamo Moscow

deals The top transfers in the mid-season window

£6M
6 **Adam Johnson**
Middlesbrough to Manchester City

£5.67M
7 **Florent Sinama Pongolle** Atletico Madrid to Sporting Lisbon

£5M
8 **Younes Kaboul**
Portsmouth to Tottenham Hotspur

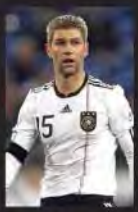
£4.8M
9 **Kleber**
Cruzeiro to Porto

£4.3M
10 **Rever**
Gremio to Wolfsburg

£4M
11 **Mame Biram Diouf**
Molde to Manchester United

£3M
18= **Craig Gardner**
Aston Villa to Birmingham City

£3M
18= **Michel**
Sporting Gijon to Birmingham City



£2.6M
20= **Thomas Hitzlsperger**
Stuttgart to Lazio

£2.6M
20= **Ruben Micael**
Nacional to Porto

£2.6M
20= **Airton**
Flamengo to Benfica

£2.6M
20= **Joao Pereira**
Braga to Sporting Lisbon

£1.8M
30 **Danny Fox**
Celtic to Burnley

£1.74M
31= **Eder Luis**
Atletico Mineiro to Benfica

£1.74M
31= **Ki Sung-yueng**
Seoul to Celtic

£1.5M
33= **Leon Cort**
Stoke City to Burnley

£1.5M
33= **Mike Williamson**
Portsmouth to Newcastle United

£1.48M
35 **Pedro Mendes**
Rangers to Sporting Lisbon

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Exclusive reports from our worldwide network of correspondents

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Triumph and tragedy

Egypt won a record seventh – and third consecutive – African Nations Cup, but the tournament never overcame its nightmare start

ANGOLA

MARK GLEESON in Luanda

EGYPT PROVIDED the fairy-tale finish to an African Nations Cup that had a nightmare start and will, ultimately, go down as a completely forgettable event.

The death of two members of the Togo delegation, plus their bus driver, in an attack in the disputed Cabinda region threw the tournament into turmoil before it had even kicked off, and the vagaries of competing in a country blessed with oil riches but scant people-resources seemed to take a toll on the playing standards.

Memorable matches were few and far between as the top teams tumbled, causing much anxiety for Africa as it hopes for some achievement at the 2010 World Cup in June.

Egypt did their best to provide the entertainment, scoring just five minutes from the end of the Final against a game Ghana side to win the trophy and make themselves the undisputed golden generation of Arab football – and arguably the best side seen in African Nations Cup history. The irony of their triumph just months after World Cup qualifying failure did not go unnoticed.

For the first time since Nigeria withdrew in a diplomatic spat with Nelson Mandela in 1996, the tournament started with just 15 teams; Togo understandably flew home some 48 hours after their arrival in Cabinda was met with a deadly volley of gun fire.

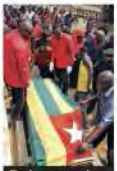
They had crossed the border from Congo into the Cabinda enclave – the site several years ago of a low-key

guerrilla insurgency, but whose separatist activity was long thought to have been quelled.

Assistant coach Amelete Abalo and press officer Stanislas Ocloo were killed in a sustained gun attack, while reserve goalkeeper Kodjovi Obilale was seriously wounded and airlifted to South Africa for surgery.

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) and the Angolan hosts reacted with great insensitivity, immediately seeking to deflect blame by suggesting Togo set themselves up for trouble by entering Angola by bus rather than plane, even though their pre-tournament training camp had been held just up the road in Pointe-Noire.

This refusal to accept responsibility continued throughout as tournament director and Angolan FA chief Justino Fernandes told a press conference that Togo had not informed organisers of the time and date of their arrival.



Final respects...the burial of the Togo team's press officer, Stanislas Ocloo

However, he could not answer a follow-up question of why, if that was indeed the case, such a large military convoy had been there to meet and escort them into the town.

It was that convoy that attracted the attention of the terrorists – the cause of Cabinda independence winning a worldwide audience, but little sympathy with such an act of violence.

Devastating blow

It was a devastating blow for the host nation that was poorly handled and then exacerbated at the end of the event when CAF banned Togo from the next two tournaments.

Rules do state that if a team pulls out of the final tournament 20 days or less before kick-off, they cannot compete in the next two qualifying campaigns, but to take such a cold view of the terror and tragedy that befell the Togo team has earned CAF president Issa Hayatou widespread condemnation, including editorials in both *L'Equipe* and *Kicker*.

Hayatou did make a massive effort the day after the attack to get Togo to stay and becalm the other sides in Cabinda – Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast and Ghana. But Togo's government insisted the side return home, and quite rightly so.

Sepp Blatter was in Luanda at the end of the tournament and

Under the gun...police take no chances as they escort the Ivory Coast team in Cabinda

also privy to the CAF executive committee's decision and must also be questioned why he did nothing to forestall a heavy-handed attitude and a public relations disaster.

The African Nations Cup in Angola was supposed to be a coming-out party for a country previously mired in brutal conflict and with a horrific colonial history.

It is now one of the world's fastest growing economies, on the back of massive oil production, but is still largely corrupt, swamped in mindless bureaucracy and with appalling infrastructure.

Investing an estimated £600million in hosting the African Nations Cup was not only an expensive PR exercise but also offered the opportunity to hurry up infrastructure projects, notably roads and hotels.

Four new stadiums, built by Chinese firms, went up in record time and were impressive.

But Angola's mirror to the world was splattered with blood before they even had the chance to show off their progress and the whole handling of the Togo tragedy will forever taint recollection of their tournament.

> **"Full marks for the Egyptians, who won six games on the trot"**

Heavy-handed... Hayatou and Blatter arrive ahead of the African Nations Cup Final

Full marks, however, for the triumph of the Egyptians, who won six games on the trot at the tournament to claim the title again. They shattered several records in the process: a seventh African Nations Cup win, the first time it has been done three times in a row and a run of unbeaten matches that stretches back from 2004 – their total is now 19 and counting.

Captain Ahmed Hassan, who at 34 was named player of the tournament for the second time in the last three editions, won a fourth Final – the first player to do so – while Hassan Shehata's triple is a new benchmark for coaches.

Crowd-puller... Angola keeper Carlos Fernandes dives in against Mali in the tournament's opening match

Name for the future

Egypt's success is made all the more admirable by the fact they were without key regulars Mohamed Aboutraika, Mohamed Barakat and Amr Zaki (who went to Hull City instead), and saw a player used only as a substitute emerge as the top goalscorer. Mohamed Nagui, known as Gedo, is a name for the future.

Egypt were a little jaded in the Final and were limited to ineffective long-range shots before they suddenly caught Ghana's defence cold with a swift passing move and the winner from Gedo five minutes from time.

But their five wins en route to the deciding match in Luanda were all evidence of the polished class and superior ability.

Egypt saw off Nigeria in their opening game, despite going a goal down early on, and repeated the same against Cameroon, in spite of gifting their opponents an own goal.

After a 4-0 win over Algeria in the semi-final, there was a smug satisfaction of revenge after defeat in November's tempestuous World Cup play-off, which caused a major

diplomatic crisis between the two Arabic-speaking countries.

Before their semi-final in Benguela, both Algeria and Egypt tried to temper talk of revenge by shutting out the media and keeping their players from any provocative pronouncements, but the air was edgy throughout. The game had three red cards but there was never any doubt about the winner.

Including Ghana in the Final, Egypt beat four of the six African teams who will play at this summer's World Cup.

They did not meet Ivory Coast, who Algeria ousted in the quarter-finals, and South Africa, who did not qualify, and it is now a major concern that the World Cup-bound sides played so poorly.

Star attractions

The tournament's star attractions, Didier Drogba and Samuel Eto'o, departed without much impact, leaving underrated Ghana the only team to offer hope as they overcame the absence of many key players, including Michael Essien, to advance to the Final.

Drogba was largely anonymous as the Ivorian swagger turned into submission in their surprise quarter-final defeat by Algeria, while Eto'o toiled in lonesome fashion up front for Cameroon and saw his side undone by woeful defending.

Essien, still suffering a hamstring injury from November, played just 45 minutes for Ghana before being crunched on the knee by team-mates at training and he was back on the treatment table in London before Ghana had overcome the hosts in the last eight.

By finishing third, Nigeria have opened up an inevitable post mortem, and the tenure of coach Shaibu Amodu looked most shaky in the day immediately after his return home. The Super Eagles have now won bronze at four of the last five African Nations Cups, but this time must consider themselves most fortunate to even get through to the final four.

> **"The aura around Nigeria disappeared in a comedy of errors"**

The aura around Nigeria disappeared in a comedy of defensive errors and some hapless finishing up front, notably from Everton's Yakubu Aiyegbeni.

Mali fired coach Stephen Keshi days after the tournament, and those in charge of Benin, Burkina Faso, Mozambique and the host nation are also likely to move on.

Angola always looked a side on the edge of disaster after squandering an unbelievable four-goal lead with 13 minutes left to play in their opening match against Mali.

It ended 4-4 but after that dramatic opening course, the 2010 African Nations Cup buffet served up play that was tedious and often full of niggles and forced stoppages.

The tournament can thank its lucky stars that it has a lucrative TV and marketing deal tied up for some time to come because this was no great advert for African soccer. ●

Match reports in Digest, starting page 88

Man of the tournament...Egypt's captain Hassan (No17) celebrates the 1-0 win over Ghana in the Final

Winter wonders

Barcelona are on course for another title after finishing the first half of the season as "virtual champions"

NO SOONER had Barcelona lost their first-ever competition under Pep Guardiola than they won a seventh title. No sooner had the coach sealed up a virtual contract renewal than he wrapped up a virtual title. Top of the table at the halfway stage of the season, Barca are Spain's *campeon de invierno* (winter champions). And while Guardiola said it was "merely anecdotal", most others insisted it was rather more significant.

Despite winning 1-0 at Sevilla in the second leg of their last-16 Spanish Cup tie, the holders couldn't save the day and Barca were out. Having won six out of six competitions since Guardiola took over, they had finally been knocked out of one. However, four days later, they took their revenge by scoring four times when Sevilla came to the Camp Nou in the league.

With the winter title in the bag, the lingering fear that gripped *cules* was dispelled a week later as the Catalan media delightedly announced that Guardiola had extended his contract. His current deal, which expires at the end of the season, was extended for another term.

Only, he hadn't and it wasn't. Not exactly.

At the following morning's training session, the Barcelona squad gave Guardiola a standing ovation before he responded: "Enough applause, get running! I haven't signed anything."

As he spoke – about "pressure", "short contracts" and "focus" – it became clear that the announcement was made under duress, designed primarily to take the pressure off. The appeals for Guardiola to stay, the debates surrounding an uncertain future, the panic that the club would collapse without him, revealed just how important he'd become.

The cup exit had played a part: with seven days between matches, Guardiola knew press speculation would increase, risking derailing the team. So he moved to stop it.

He announced his intention to continue for another season but that nothing had actually been signed – as any new deal would have to be ratified by the new president when elections are held in the summer. All he'd really done was postpone the issue. But three days later, Barcelona beat Real Valladolid 3-0 in the final game of the first half of the season, and so won a virtual title to celebrate a virtual renewal. Yet both were significant.

Guardiola's promise had an immediate impact on the atmosphere, and the winter championship is not just an empty platitude. It means something in Spain as the season is split into two identical halves, played against the same teams in the same order. Everyone has played everyone else, so positions are not merely a quirk of the fixture list. They mean something. And for some, that's a major worry.

Relegation battle

At the halfway stage, a relegation battle looms for Valladolid (17th), Malaga (16th) and Espanyol (14th). Almeria, in 15th, have improved since Juanma Lillo took over as coach and should climb. Below them, Spain's bottom three are the three that came up.

It is nine seasons since all three promoted clubs survived, but one normally does and Spain hasn't seen all three get relegated immediately for 12 years (and even that was when five went down as the 22-team La Liga was reduced to its current format).

With the smallest budget, a limited squad and boardroom civil war raging, it was always likely Xerez would end their debut top-flight season by going straight back down and, with just eight goals in 19 games – they are on course for an unwanted La Liga record.

Tenerife have played better football than their position suggests – only four teams have had more shots – but they have been weak and wasteful. Away from home, with every game meaning a three-hour flight, they have yet to collect a single win.

> "The appeals for Guardiola to stay reveal just how important he has become"

As for Zaragoza, you'd think they would be too good to go down – only that's exactly what everyone said two seasons ago when they did go down. Sacking coach Marcelino hasn't helped and his successor, Jose Aurelio Gay, has picked up just two points from five games. A few more defeats and Zaragoza will be on their third coach. When they last went down, they had four, so there's a lesson there somewhere if they wish to heed it.

At the other end of the table, there have been surprisingly successful starts to the season for two teams with contrasting styles: Athletic Bilbao in eighth and Getafe in seventh. However, the season's real revelation are Mallorca. Hit by financial crisis, failed buyouts and public mud-slinging after selling their best players, most expected them to be fighting relegation. Instead, thanks largely to the psychological work of coach Gregorio Manzano, they have won nine out of nine at home and hold an incredible Champions League place, sitting in fourth.

Just ahead of them are Valencia, who have held onto their best players, pushed their economic crisis to the backs of their minds and claimed a position more in keeping with a squad led by second top-scorer David Villa.

In sixth place are Sevilla, whose failure to break down defensive teams at home has been their unravelling. When they beat Real Madrid, many thought Sevilla would challenge for the title, but draws against Espanyol, Malaga and Valladolid, and defeats against Racing Santander and Getafe, have seen them pick up just 18 of 30 points at home and left coach Manolo Jimenez under real pressure.

Two sides that ought to be

challenging for a Champions League place, haven't – at least not yet.

Villarreal are recovering from a poor start, while Atletico Madrid lurch from crisis to crisis, with their second coach of the season, Quique Flores, already under pressure.

Finishing top

While much can change, the state of play at the end of the front 19, going into the second half of the season, does matter. Especially at the top. In 12 of the last 15 years, the winter champions have ended up league champions. Finishing the first half of the season top of the table is not meaningless – and finishing the first half of the season top of the table the way Barcelona did certainly is not.

Guardiola's side sit five points clear of Real Madrid and, with 15 wins and four draws in their first 19 games, they are unbeaten – only the fifth side in history to achieve that feat. Athletic Bilbao did it in 1931-32, Espanyol in 1932-33 and Real Madrid in 1966-67, but those were only 10-team leagues. Since then, only Real Madrid have done it (in 1966-67, 1988-89, and 1996-97), while Real Sociedad finished the first half of 2002-03 unbeaten – only to lose the league to Real Madrid on the final day of the season.

The talk had been of a Barcelona side that sparkled less and some even dared to predict the end of an era. But even though they have picked up a point fewer than at this stage than last season, and scored 10 goals less, there's a seriousness that brokers few arguments: Barca have conceded fewer goals and maintained possession brilliantly, completing almost 2,000 passes more than Madrid.

Above all, though, there is one hugely telling statistic: not only have Barcelona gone through half of the season unbeaten, they have not been behind for a single minute.

It is a measure of Barca's excellence that Madrid, on 44, have enough points to have been top in eight of the last 12 campaigns. Madrid may have improved – scoring three more and conceded 13 fewer than last term – but catching Barcelona will be hard. ●

Unstoppable...Barcelona's Lionel Messi, who is La Liga's top scorer with 15 goals, takes on Valladolid

Change at the top?

The closing championship could see another shift in the balance of power

ARGENTINA

ERIC WEIL in Buenos Aires

ANY HOPES last year's surprise opening championship winners Banfield may have had of adding this term's closing title would seem to have disappeared with the departure of striker Santiago Silva.

The 28-year-old Uruguayan scored 14 of their 25 goals in the apertura and, though he said he would have preferred to stay, Silva now links up with Hernan Lopez at Velez Sarsfield. With the added admission from Banfield that the Libertadores Cup is their main priority, the clausura looks wide open this year.

River Plate, Boca Juniors, Independiente, San Lorenzo and Racing Club are all absent from the forthcoming Libertadores so expect them to perform better this time out.

With goals hard to come by in the opening championship, clubs have been looking to sign strikers – though a shortage of domestic forwards means they have had to look at neighbouring countries.

Racing Club signed Claudio Bieler from Sudamericana Cup winners LDU Quito, while San Lorenzo hired Emiliano Alfaro from Uruguay's Liverpool and River Plate took Rodrigo Rojas from Paraguay's Olimpia.

The biggest sale so far has seen the departure of Lanus goalgetter Eduardo Salvio to Atletico Madrid for around £7million. Last season Lanus sold the league's top scorer, Jose Sand, for £6.5m but they have yet to spend any of the money from those sales.

Statistics show that Argentinian clubs sold 393 players to foreign sides in the last decade for approximately £662m. However, that money has done little to help badly administered domestic clubs and their corrupt officials. Take River Plate, who have regularly sold their best players for good fees.

Having failed to qualify for the Libertadores Cup for the first time in 15 years, River's presidential elections in January were won by 1978 World Cup-winning captain Daniel Passarella (see page 65). However, he got more than he bargained for when he started opening drawers.

League priority...Independiente (in red) and San Lorenzo will have no distractions

> "Coach Alfio Basile left Boca before the clausura began, saying he could do nothing with the team"

Auditors found that while the club declared debts of £7m at its last AGM, the real debt is more like £25m. Not only that, but the previous committee, under chairman Jose Aguilar, had already collected money from forthcoming television rights and future deals for sponsorship, advertising and 10 rock concerts – in some cases as far ahead as 2014.

Aguilar's committee also had a closer than usual relationship with the club's hooligan gang, who were given money from the unpopular sale of Gonzalo Higuain to Real Madrid, in 2007, in return for supporting the deal.

While it remains to be seen whether Passarella will take Aguilar to court, several other newly elected committees are set to take legal action against previous presidents – notably San Lorenzo, Newell's Old Boys and Rosario Central – but elsewhere there seems to be an agreement between presidents and ex-presidents, and corruption continues uninterrupted.

There was some good news for River , however, with a 3-1 win over Boca Juniors in a summer tournament in which young strikers Daniel Villalva (aged 17) and Gabriel Funes Mori (18) were the matchwinners.

Boca's defeat saw coach Alfio Basile leave before the closing championship had even started. Basile, national coach until October 2008, left complaining he could not do anything with the team and he was angry at the lack of reinforcements. Reserve-team boss Abel Alves, who has been first-team caretaker on three occasions, has been appointed coach for the duration of the clausura.

It was rumoured that Boca team manager Carlos Bianchi, their former successful coach who refuses to return to the job, helped push Basile out by putting reinforcements on hold. The day after Basile left, one of the players he had wanted, midfielder Jesus Mendez, was signed from Rosario Central. Boca also wanted to take Fernando Gago back on loan from Real Madrid, but a matter of unpaid taxes in Spain stopped that.

The resignation of Bianchi two days later only serves to highlight how the role of team manager in Argentina has not been properly defined.

Meanwhile, the Argentinian FA has still not confronted many of its most serious problems.

Relegation remains decided by points obtained over the past three seasons, which means clubs finishing mid-table can still go down.

Visiting fans are still not legally allowed to attend lower division matches (though some do manage to get in), and only limited numbers are permitted in the top flight. While this has reduced trouble inside stadiums, the hooligans now fight outside, mostly among themselves.

And, finally, there is still no agreement among clubs about distribution of the TV rights, which should be paid for the next 10 years by a government which has serious financial problems.

Maybe things aren't going to change much in Argentinian football after all. ●

Picture courtesy of S.A.M.D.

Future vision...Ferencvaros' new 21,000-seat stadium in Budapest

The £50million question

Will a stadium gamble pay off for the fallen giant of the Hungarian game?

HUNGARY

PETER JON CRESSWELL in Budapest

HUNGARY'S MOST famous football club, Ferencvaros, will be transformed if ambitious plans to build a new £50million stadium complex at Nepliget succeed. But as the spring season resumes in February, the club continue to flounder in mid-table following three seasons in the second tier.

The man behind the project is British property tycoon Kevin McCabe – the chairman of Sheffield United who also has interests in China's Chengdu Blades. The English Championship club also have partner arrangements with Central Coast Mariners of Australia, Sao Paulo of Brazil and White Star Woluwe of Belgium to develop young talent from each other's nurseries.

McCabe's Hungarian firm, Esplanade Kft, bought Hungary's most-titled football club – plus its stadium, real estate and debts – for £8.6m in early 2008. It was estimated that the debts amounted to more than half of that total, with financial mismanagement the reason why "Fradi" were forcibly relegated for the first time in their illustrious history in the summer of 2006.

Promotion arrived – eventually – in the summer of 2009 but success was short-lived. Poor form saw the removal of English coach Bobby Davison, to be replaced by former Everton and Blackburn Rovers defender Craig Short, who had been working with the club's reserve and youth teams.

"For me it's been a steep learning curve but a great opportunity," says Short. "The players have responded well. Technically, they are very adept – and a British coach should add steel and mental attitude."

Soon after Short took over, Fradi were losing 3-1 at home to lowly Diosgyor when a pitch invasion stopped play and focus turned once more to the club's notorious hard-core following, the so-called B-Kozep.

"Ironically, it's been easier for the players to perform in a relaxed fashion behind closed doors," admits Short of the games that followed. "Now I have to get them to do the same in front of 10,000 people."

Perhaps Short is being generous with his crowd estimates. The club from Budapest, who have been league champions a record 28 times, have an average home gate of just 5,000 – which is still more than city rivals Vasas, Ujpest and Honved. As for MTK, a recent cup tie against champions Debrecen attracted just 300 people.

Despite this, McCabe's blueprint for the new stadium complex is being put into practice. Alexander Gerstl, the director in charge of the project, has recently stated that, with preliminary planning permission, work can begin this summer and is timed for a 2012 opening. As well as a new 21,000-seat multifunctional stadium, the plans call for a hotel, shopping centre, fitness centre, restaurants, bars and offices, plus a club museum.

The new ground, to be named the Albert Arena after 1960s star Florian Albert, will be rotated 90 degrees so that the afternoon sun does not interfere with the goalkeeper's vision (which is a UEFA directive). Already Fradi are thinking ahead to Europe and lucrative TV fees.

Last autumn, partly thanks to Michel Platini's new minnow-friendly format for qualification, Debrecen became the first Hungarian side to take part in the Champions League group stage since Ferencvaros in 1995.

But before Fradi can once again think of such adventures they must first win some domestic silverware.

Following the success here of Arsenal-trainee turned journeyman striker Paul Shaw and former Barnsley man Istvan Ferenczi, Fradi have just signed Anthony Elding and Sam Stockley, from Crewe Alexandra and Port Vale respectively, both of whom have years of experience in England's lower leagues. Veteran club captain Peter Lipcsei – though now rarely fit – played under Bobby Robson at Porto, while 33-year-old midfielder Denes Rosa turned out for Wolverhampton Wanderers and Scottish side Hibernian.

"We tried bringing youngsters over but they seemed a bit overawed," reveals Short. "The difference isn't so great between clubs in this division.

"For this season we should achieve a top-six finish. Then, who knows?" ●

> "Already Fradi are thinking ahead to Europe and lucrative TV fees"

Escape to victory

Inter's 2-0 win in the Milan derby dispelled any lingering doubts over their domination of the league campaign

ITALY

PADDY AGNEW in Rome

IF EVER anyone had any doubts about the current domination of Internazionale in Serie A, they were definitively dispelled by their emphatic 2-0 win over Milan in a thrilling city derby at the end of January.

For much of this season, Inter have looked as if they will soon run far and away with another *scudetto* and, after this latest triumph, their escape to final victory has already begun.

It would be hard to imagine a more total win than that registered by Inter against their city cousins. Suffice to say, this was a game in which Inter played for 70 minutes with 10 men, in which they twice hit the post and in which Milan missed a penalty. Despite all that, they still won 2-0 thanks to an opportunist 10th-minute goal from Argentinian striker Diego Milito and a precise 65th-minute free-kick from new boy Goran Pandev.

Put simply, in the opening 20 minutes – before the dismissal of Wesley Sneijder – Inter had looked sharper, fitter, more hungry and more dangerous. Not for the first time this season, they proved that they are truly "up for it" when it comes to crucial games. Twice during the autumn Champions League group stage, away to Dinamo Kyiv and at home to Rubin Kazan, Inter were in a do-or-die situation – and twice they delivered the goods, winning both games.

You might have expected Inter's talented coach, Jose Mourinho, to have been more than pleased with a good night's work. Well, he probably was, but in the aftermath of the Milan game he chose to give another example of his well-proven ability to deflect attention from his players, thanks to his recurrent bouts of polemics: "We cannot call the championship contest over because I have now understood that they won't let us finish it off," he said. "I smell a bad smell, I have a strange taste.

"In our last two games, we have had first two penalties blown against us and then two players sent off. This didn't happen by chance. But that's your problem. It's your championship. I'm a foreigner. One day I will leave."

So, what was he talking about? The two penalties had come in a 2-2 draw away to Bari one week earlier. In truth, if one of the penalties was debatable, the second was sacrosanct. Likewise, referee Gianluca Rocchi had little option but to send off Sneijder in the Milan derby given that the Dutchman indulged in sustained, sarcastic applause right in his face. As for the other sending-off, that of Inter's Brazilian defender Lucio, it came so late in the game – the 92nd minute – that it made no difference.

In truth, Mourinho's polemics illustrate much about the context of the game. The start of the new year had unveiled a sparkling Milan side which seemed to have moved on from an autumn revival to become a serious title challenger to Inter. While Inter were struggling to beat Chievo 1-0, Siena 4-3 and then drawing 2-2 with Bari, Milan were beating Genoa 5-2, Juventus 3-0 and Siena 4-0.

Riding for a fall

If ever Inter were riding for a fall, this seemed like the moment – or so the Milan fans, still smarting from a 4-0 drubbing back in August, might have hoped. On top of that, there was the league's decision to allow Milan to reschedule their midweek Italian Cup quarter-final with Udinese, helping them to stay fresh for the derby game.

In the end, it all counted for nothing. By the close of January, Inter were eight points clear of joint-second Milan and Roma. If the title contest were a boxing match, the referee would be entitled to stop it.

If Milan limped out of the derby licking their wounds, their pain was small fry compared to the agonies being endured by Juventus down the road in Turin. On the night before the Milan derby, Juve had crashed 2-1 at home to Roma. Salt was rubbed in the wound by the fact that Roma are coached by Claudio Ranieri – who was controversially sacked by Juve last May and replaced by Ciro Ferrara with two Serie A games still to play.

> "It would be hard to imagine a more total win than that registered by Inter against their city cousins"

Juventus gloom... Roma's John Arne Riise (right) scores

Lest anyone think that Ranieri was willing to let bygones be bygones, he told TV cameras after the game: "I was pleased to say hello to the Juventus players and staff. As for the directors, I have nothing to say to them."

That defeat by Roma represented Juve's seventh loss in nine games since early December, when, ironically, they had pulled off their biggest win of the league season, beating Inter 2-1 in Turin. Since then not only had Juventus lost five of their last six Serie A games but they had also been dumped out of the Champions League in a 4-1 drubbing by Bayern Munich.

For weeks, it had seemed merely a question of time before Ferrara would be sacked. Defeat by Roma was clearly the end of the line for him, even if he was still in charge when the team lost yet another match five days later, beaten 2-1 by Inter in an Italian Cup quarter-final tie at San Siro.

To some extent, Ferrara's time on the Juventus bench, not to say his agony, had been prolonged by the difficulties in finding a suitable replacement. The club had been keen to avoid making a short-term, stop-gap appointment. Their original long-term choice was current Russia and ex-Chelsea coach Guus Hiddink, but when it became clear that he would require a salary of around £6million per season the club changed tack.

Their next choice was the current Liverpool coach Rafa Benitez, but it became obvious that Benitez either could not or did not want to separate from Liverpool just yet. Come next June, it may be a different matter.

Thus the club settled on an old warhorse, 56-year-old Alberto Zaccheroni, a coach who has handled Udinese, Milan, Inter and Lazio, winning the Serie A title in 1999 with Milan. In theory, "Zac" will be keeping the seat warm for Benitez; in practice, he will hope to hang on into next season by regenerating Juventus.

Judging by Juve's 1-1 home draw with Lazio in Zaccheroni's first game in charge, he has plenty to work on. ●

No holding Inter...goalscorer Pandev (left) gets away from Milan's Ignazio Abate

The Anatolian invasion

Kayserispor and Bursaspor are challenging the established order

TURKEY

MEHMET DEMIRCAN in Istanbul

JUST WHEN YOU thought the Turkish Super Lig would maintain its 51-year status quo and produce a predictable title race, the 2009-10 season has thrown up a major surprise: the Anatolian invasion.

"Anatolia" is a word used to describe the region of the country outside of Istanbul, so all non-Istanbul clubs are referred to as Anatolian clubs. And in the first half of the season, the Anatolian invasion was led by Kayserispor and Bursaspor.

Kayserispor have lost just once at home in their Kadir Has stadium so far and they sit in fourth place, just five points behind leaders Fenerbahce, and – with ex-international midfielder Tolunay Kafkas as coach – they have impressed with an attractive, positive style of play.

Their key figure this term has been striker Ariza Makukula, a DR Congo-born Portugal international. He may have only arrived on loan from Benfica this season, but he has been scoring as if he has been in the country for years. With 15 league goals so far, there is even talk of him squeezing into Carlos Queiroz's World Cup squad.

However, Makukula has not been the only impressive figure at Kayserispor. Young Turkey Under-21 defenders such as Serdar Kesimal and Eren Gungor have made a big difference, while the talented Furkan Ozcal and Argentinian dribbler Franco Cangele have excelled in midfield.

Meanwhile, Bursaspor have done even better, ending the first half of the season in third place.

The team from the olive city of Bursa feature the talented and in-demand striker Sercan Yildirim and are coached by Ertugrul Saglam, who made his name at Besiktas.

Shock waves

News from Anatolia has not been limited to Kayserispor and Bursaspor – and not all of it has been good, with the expulsion of Ankaraspor sending shock waves through the Turkish game.

Ankaraspor were judged to have "anti-competitive" links with city rivals Ankaragucu and the situation came to a head when Ahmet Gokcek was elected chairman of Ankaragucu. Gokcek is the son of the mayor of Ankara, Melih Gokcek, who is also the honorary chairman of Ankaraspor.

> **"Kayserispor have impressed with an attractive, positive style of play"**

The FA considered this to be "contrary to sporting competitiveness" and kicked Ankaraspor out of the league, awarding all the other teams a 3-0 victory over them.

Of the big four clubs, only Trabzonspor have changed their coach so far. They sent Hugo Broos back to Belgium after just three months and appointed former national boss Senol Gunes, who was a popular choice with the fans. After making the change, Trabzon regained their fighting spirit and just lost once in six weeks.

League leaders at the halfway stage, Christoph Daum's Fenerbahce made a good start but have been dogged by scandal. The club offloaded Kazim Kazim – the London-born forward known as Colin Kazim-Richards when he played in England – to Toulouse after he was involved in a hotel sex scandal.

The most talked about club, however, have been Galatasaray, who currently lie second but are seen as the strongest contenders for the championship. Club captain Arda Turan is in exceptional form and has received support from experienced players such as Harry Kewell and Kader Keita.

Gala are currently joint-top scorers in the league, with 39 goals in 19 games, which prompted many to question coach Frank Rijkaard's January loan signings from England: Jo (Manchester City) and Giovani Dos Santos (Tottenham Hotspur).

The most disappointing team so far have been Besiktas. The Black Eagles, double winners last season, could miss out on silverware altogether this time.

Their biggest problem has been scoring goals, with Nihat and Bobo both out of sorts, leading many to question the judgement of coach Mustafa Denizli. ●

Jostling for position...Kayserispor (in stripes) make their presence felt against Bursaspor

China crisis...the country's new soccer supremo Wei sets out his anti-corruption agenda at his first press conference

Cleaning up?

The Chinese game has again been hit by accusations of match-fixing

MICHAEL CHURCH in Hong Kong

FOR BELEAGUERED Chinese football followers, corruption scandals have become more common than on-field success for either the national team or the clubs in continental competition.

Yet the latest crackdown on the scourge of match-fixing and bribery might just be the start of a much-needed move towards transparency in Asia's most blighted league.

Four senior officials within the Chinese Football Association (CFA), as well as individuals associated with the Chengdu Blades club, were detained in late 2009 and early 2010 as part of a clean-up initiated by the country's premier, Hu Jintao.

That a figure of Hu's stature should involve himself in the affairs of the country's most popular sport highlights just how the game's standing has slipped in China. Disillusion reigns supreme and football's popularity is plummeting.

The national team – who have qualified only once for the World Cup finals, in 2002 – are currently ranked barely inside the top 100 on FIFA's ladder and they have failed to reach the final phase of Asia's qualifying tournament for each of the last two World Cups.

The performance of China's Olympic team at the Beijing Games in 2008 was nothing short of an embarrassment; a black mark against the nation during an otherwise hugely successful event.

The country's clubs, meanwhile, have made little impact in the Asian Champions League, with none of their four representatives progressing to the knockout phase of the competition last year.

> "Disillusion reigns supreme and football's popularity is plummeting"

On top of all that, the Chinese Super League has been blighted by corruption and innuendo for the best part of a decade.

The latest purge, however, threatens to go deep into the fabric of the sport in China and perhaps this time it will offer an opportunity for a fresh start.

That is certainly the hope of new CFA president Wei Di.

"We must correct the cheating and bribery while improving the management and organisation of the league," Wei said at his first press conference as the head of the troubled body. "We should also look at the problems as a chance to start anew."

Involvement in corruption

Previously the head of the Chinese Water Sports Association, Wei took over after CFA vice-presidents Nan Yong and Yang Yimin – along with Zhang Jianqiang, who is head of the referees' department – were arrested for their involvement in corruption.

Several days later, Lu Feng, the general manager of the Chinese Football League, disappeared from public view and was also believed to have been arrested. This followed the arrest at the end of 2009 of entrepreneur Tony Xu, the chairman of Chengdu Blades, and his deputy, You Kewei, over allegations of paying off opponents to secure promotion.

There have also been allegations of players paying to secure their place in the national squad.

Ironically, it was Nan who heralded the impact the crackdown would have following Xu's arrest in December.

"If match-fixing and gambling remain rampant as now, Chinese soccer will be dead," he said. "We are ready to pay a huge price to weed it out once and for all."

In a country known for its harsh stance on corruption – government officials involved in major fraud have been handed the death penalty in the past – Nan could well be the one who pays the greatest price of all.

Wei has set his sights on improving the standard of youth development within the country – he claimed at his press conference that it was presently "primitive" – and, in doing so, he hopes to revitalise the game in China.

Whether fans have the patience to wait, especially after so many false dawns, could determine the fate of the game in a country that claims to have invented the sport. ●

Over and out

Mouscron's demise offered a painful reminder of the fragile nature of Belgian football finances

BELGIUM

NICHOLAS HARLING in Brussels

HARDLY A SEASON goes by in Belgium without one club or another encountering a severe financial crisis and plunging down the divisions as a harsh consequence. Will they never learn?

This time it was the turn of little Excelsior Mouscron – a club that had punched above its weight for years – to follow the likes of Aalst, Lommel and La Louviere in suffering the punishment of failing to pay the tax authorities. An amount in the region of £175,000 is not a huge sum compared to the debts incurred by other clubs who went to the wall, but it was big enough in this case because of the nature of the creditors.

The first hint of Mouscron's financial difficulties emerged in 2006 and they were not even resolved by an investment of £7m by businessman Philippe Dufermont. Despite rumours of a rescue bid by Manchester City, who wanted to use Mouscron as a feeder club, the club's plight turned into a saga that lasted for most of the first half of the campaign.

Administration followed, with Mouscron lying in a respectable 10th place with 23 points. With the players unwilling to risk any injury that might jeopardise their chances of moving elsewhere, Mouscron failed to turn up for two games. A youth team represented the club in a subsequent fixture against Lokeren – whose 5-0 win came a few days before Mouscron were wound up and removed from the league by the Belgian Football Association (KBVB).

Lokeren, who had also won an earlier fixture against Mouscron, were among the opposing clubs most affected by the KBVB's decision to expunge Mouscron's record from the table. By forfeiting six points, Lokeren found themselves in danger of the drop and duly complained, only to be somewhat placated when the KBVB told them that only one club – Mouscron – would be automatically relegated. If Lokeren are to fall too, it will be via the end-of-season play-offs against the top-placed clubs in the second division.

Some countries, notably England, penalise such clubs by deducting points, but with each serious transgression in the far more strict Belgian league, clubs run the risk of starting the next season one division lower. Mouscron were found guilty on four counts so have been told that any reformed side must start in the fourth division next season, unless a merger – or a fusion as it is known in Belgium – can go ahead with near neighbours RRC Peruwelz, who would be expected to maintain their current third division status assuming they avoid relegation. The new club would be known as Mouscron-Peruwelz.

Ironically, Peruwelz have far greater debts than Mouscron but, significantly, no money is owed to the taxman.

The tribunal looking into Mouscron's affairs criticised the KBVB for operating a flawed system, but that will be of little comfort to the club's supporters. The only grain of solace was provided by three fellow top-flight clubs – Roeselare, Club Brugge and Zulte Waregem – who all promised Mouscron's season-ticket holders free entry to their games.

For a club who had retained their place among the elite since achieving promotion in 1994, Mouscron's descent to the depths of Belgian football will be a salutary lesson for many. Coached after earning promotion by Georges Leekens, who went on to lead the national team, the club rose to third in the top flight, were twice Belgian Cup runners-up and competed twice in the former UEFA Cup – making history by playing one of their home ties across the border in France on Wasquehal's ground because their own Stade Le Canonnier was deemed unsuitable.

> **"With the players unwilling to risk injuries... Mouscron failed to turn up for two games"**

Support... Mouscron chairman Dufermont

Extra ammunition

There have been numerous coaches of the Belgium side since Leekens and the latest incumbent Dick Advocaat, who was appointed in September, raised a few eyebrows when he asked the KBVB if he could combine the job with that of coaching AZ Alkmaar in his native Holland following the dismissal of Ronald Koeman. Even more eyebrows were raised when his request was agreed to, thereby giving critics with extra ammunition should he fail in his objective of taking the Red Devils to the European Championship finals in 2012.

Advocaat subsequently found himself in the curious position of sanctioning the transfer of Belgium international Sebastien Pocognoli from Alkmaar back to Standard Liege. The left-back signed a four-and-a-half-year deal, saying: "I'm glad to be able to return to the club who raised me."

Pocognoli arrived nine days too

late to prevent Standard's humiliating 4-0 home defeat to Anderlecht, who strengthened their position at the top of the table with their first success in the Stade Maurice Dufrasne since 2002. Late own goals by Moussa Traore and Eliaquim Mangala compounded the embarrassment for Standard, who will have scant chance of a third successive title triumph unless they make up ground to finish in the top six – which will determine the main honour for the first time in a controversial play-off format.

Anderlecht's joy at mastering Standard came with the added satisfaction of seeing the hosts reduced to 10 men after Axel Witsel's dismissal for a foul on Roland Juhasz, even though Witsel's two-game suspension was subsequently lifted after a Standard protest. Bad feelings between the clubs had simmered since Witsel broke Marcin Wasilewski's leg with a terrible challenge in the previous game between the sides in September – for which the perpetrator received an 11-game ban (later reduced to eight games) and death threats.

The absence of the Polish defender, who was expected to be out of action for a year – but may just return by the end of the season – has been offset by the continued prowess up front displayed by the remarkable Romelu Lukaku, who will not be 17 until May. A product of Congolese parents who, happily for Advocaat, now have Belgian nationality, Lukaku confirmed his position as the league's top scorer with two goals in Anderlecht's 5-0 away win at Germinal Beerschot.

Anderlecht went into February 19 points clear of Standard and six in front of second-placed Club Brugge, who have signed Belgium defender Peter Van der Heyden from Mainz.

Such is Anderlecht's current form that Brugge will need far more than a new left-back to prevent Ariel Jacobs' side from regaining the title. ●

The end...it's all over for Mouscron and defender Alexandre Teklak (left)

Carry on Montpellier

More good news for the unfancied south-coast side as Lyon continue to struggle

LET'S START WITH a good news story. Success in football doesn't always have to come via an open cheque book. Montpellier, the southern outfit that usually battles it out with rugby to be the dominant sport in the city, continue to take Ligue 1 by storm. After 22 games they find themselves sitting pretty in second place behind league leaders Bordeaux, three points ahead of Lyon, six in front of Marseille and a massive 13 beyond Paris Saint-Germain.

They have already beaten both Lyon and Marseille in the league and managed a draw against PSG in the opening game of the campaign. The club's fans aren't perhaps the most loyal – with gates fluctuating between 15,000 and 30,000 depending on the glamour or otherwise of the opposition – but there are already those with long memories who are harking back to the glory days when they won the French Cup in 1990 and League Cup two years later.

New heroes are also emerging at the Stade de la Mosson to rival the two most famous sons to have worn the blue of Montpellier: Eric Cantona and Carlos Valderrama. Croatian defender Emir Spahic has been a rock who is attracting the attention of bigger clubs, Colombian forward Victor Hugo Montano has led the line well, while the much-travelled Souleymane Camara has also been in top form.

Regardless of whether Montpellier are still in a Champions League spot come the end of the season, this has been an incredible campaign, and their 2-0 win over big-boy neighbours Marseille at the end of January has given them the kind of bragging rights that everyone thought impossible at the start of the campaign.

Elsewhere, there was more bad news for Lyon, who were knocked out of the French Cup and the League Cup in the same week, heaping extra pressure on beleaguered boss Claude Puel. A 2-1 home win in the league against PSG bought Puel a bit more time, but with Lyon facing the real possibility of a second season without a trophy after a £70million recruitment drive, you wouldn't bet on the former Lille man being at the helm for the start of the next campaign.

> "New heroes are emerging at the Stade de la Mosson to rival Cantona and Valderrama"

Solid... Montpellier's Geoffrey Jourdren (No16) and Abdel El Kaoutari (No21) stop Marseille's Bakari Kone

Sacking of Perrin

Saint-Etienne remain precariously placed despite the sacking of Alain Perrin after a catastrophic first half of the season.

Perrin has been fired from a number of high-profile jobs, including that of Lyon coach, and Saint-Etienne owner Bernard Caiazzo reckons the 53-year-old has banked in the region of €10m (£8.7m) from his contract terminations and therefore "you might question his desire".

Perrin himself claimed he felt his sacking was "unjust", but says he doesn't harbour any ill feeling towards the club. And with €10m in the bank, why would he? Perrin's replacement, at least in the short term, is former assistant coach Christophe Galtier.

Someone now perhaps a little lighter in the pocket than Perrin, is Marseille defender Stephane Mbia. Thieves took advantage of the knowledge that he was away with Cameroon, preparing for the African Nations Cup in Angola, and robbed his house, making off with jewellery, watches, a hi-fi and a home cinema.

All the football gossip in France, meanwhile, centres around whether Laurent Blanc will replace Raymond Domenech as coach of the national team after the World Cup. While the French federation president, Jean-Pierre Escalettes, has gone on record saying Blanc has the perfect profile for the job, the man himself has refused to answer questions on the issue – which has only helped to increase the speculation.

Blanc has done a fantastic job at Bordeaux, of course, and the club's fine performances in the Champions League have alerted many of Europe's elite to his potential. Time will tell where *Le President* finally ends up, but you can rest assured Bordeaux will be doing all they can to hold on to their man a while longer. ●

Forward thinking...Dortmund's 21-year-old central defender Hummels (left) scored twice in the 3-2 win at Koln

Youthful promise

Clubs are placing increasing importance on home-grown talent

GERMANY

NICK BIDWELL in Munich

IT'S ENOUGH to make any football protectionist weep with joy. As befits a country which boasts the European Under-21 and Under-17 champions, Germany is making what many would regard as a much-needed stand for locally sourced talent.

While other leading European leagues continue to swoon at the sight of an overseas player and his heavily edited show reel, the Bundesliga is positively celebrating the indigenous.

Over the past decade, the average age of domestic-born players in the top flight has fallen from 28.8 to 25.3 and the percentage of home-grown under-23s is now a healthy 27.5 per cent, up two-and-half points from the low water mark of 1998.

These fledglings are not only found at clubs with financial constraints in the lower reaches of the table. Crucial to the continued well-being of the full national team, the kids are now colonising every competitive side in the land. Who said an overreliance on inexperience can only lead to the poorhouse? Certainly not supporters of Bayer Leverkusen, Schalke and Borussia Dortmund – all of whom are thriving after a massive transfusion of rosy-cheeked energy, fearlessness and skill this season.

While many of the league's big hitters are struggling for form – this term's absent without leave include *Nationalmannschaft* strikers Miroslav Klose and Lukas Podolski, Wolfsburg skipper Josue and Aliaksandr Hleb of Stuttgart – the new wave are experiencing no such problems.

Leverkusen owe much of their concerted title push to the consistently excellent fresh-faced guard of playmaker Toni Kroos and defenders Gonzalo Castro, Stefan Reinartz and Daniel Schwaab; the Dortmund duo of centre-back Mats Hummels and defensive midfielder Sven Bender are performing so well they could even make Germany's World Cup squad; while Schalke coach Felix Magath rolled the dice to spectacular effect when placing his faith in utility man Benedikt Howedes, midfielder Joel Matip and full-back Lukas Schmitz.

> "The future of the German game could not be any brighter"

Normally ones who prefer bring in haute couture threads from afar, rather than make the most of in-house designs, even multi-millionaires Bayern Munich are doing their bit for the rejuvenation process.

Bayern coach Louis Van Gaal, who finally seems to have slipped the bridle on the wild horses in his dressing room, has been an advocate of youth throughout his career and needed little prompting to extensively deploy defender Holger Badstuber and attacker Thomas Muller.

Winning on all fronts

Reasons for the "stay young and beautiful" trend are many and varied. The global recession, of course, has played its part, as has the lack of value for money in traditional transfer markets such as eastern Europe. Then there is the realisation that a successful do-it-yourself approach offers the chance to win on all fronts by rearing high quality, relatively cheap players who can later be sold on for a profit.

Beyond the generalities, however, each club has its own motives in going native. Instinctively, Leverkusen and Werder Bremen prefer prudence, huge debts have forced Schalke's hand, and at Dortmund a spate of injuries and coach Jurgen Klopp's natural instinct for risk-taking meant a change of the ground rules.

Yet above all else, clubs are turning to youngsters for the simple reason that they can. In the last decade a massive amount of time, thought and money has been invested in bringing the country up to speed with youth development. With 366 *stutzpunkte* (regional centres of excellence) and *leistungszentren* (elite academies run by professional outfits) now moving into top gear, the future of the German game could not be brighter.

"It has to be a commendable goal for clubs to have confidence in young players and not have the old, automatic reflex of signing an expensive foreigner," says national team coach Joachim Low.

And who could argue with him? ●

Back to his roots

Will others follow Jocelyn Angloma in swapping international allegiance?

Cup shock... Angloma (left) celebrates his goal against Canada at the 2007 Gold Cup with Loic Loval

THERE MAY BE an old adage in sport stating that "one man does not make a team" – but one player has had a massive influence on football in the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe.

As a French overseas department, Guadeloupe is ineligible to join FIFA and, therefore, the only international outings for the national side (known as the Gwada Boys) come in the Caribbean Championship and the CONCACAF Gold Cup. As a result, past players such as Marius Tresor and Lilian Thuram – who were both born in Guadeloupe – opted to play for France and went on to represent the national side with great distinction.

However, in 2006, another former France international decided it was time to make a representative stand for his homeland.

Jocelyn Angloma was born at Les Abymes in Guadeloupe and went on to appear at Euro 92 and Euro 96 with *Les Bleus*. A Champions League winner in 1993 with Marseille, his career at international level was disappearing when, in 2000, a new administration at the Ligue Guadeloupeenne de Football (LGF) began recruiting French players with parents or grandparents from the archipelago.

A five-year gap was needed before anyone who had played for France could feature for Guadeloupe, but the last of Angloma's 37 caps was long gone when he joined the Gwada Boys at the 2007 Caribbean Cup in Trinidad & Tobago, along with fellow former international David Sommeil.

"When Angloma decided to play for his country that was a good thing for the spirit of the Gwada Boys," says Alain Soreze, who was head of the LGF delegation in Trinidad & Tobago.

> **"While France will remain the preferred choice of players like William Gallas, the Gwada Boys offer an opportunity that might not otherwise arise for lower-league players"**

"I felt this difference in the spirit of the group there with the presence of Angloma and also Sommeil."

Guadeloupe finished fourth to qualify for their first Gold Cup finals, held later that year in the US – where they beat Canada 2-1 in the group stage and reached the quarter-finals. Here they edged out Honduras – who are at this summer's World Cup finals – by the same score, before their run ended with a 1-0 loss to regional giants Mexico in the semi-finals.

Under coach Roger Salnot, they reached the semis once again, in 2007, at the renamed Caribbean Championship in Jamaica, where they finished third and qualified for another Gold Cup, once again in the US, in 2009. This time Guadeloupe dispatched Panama 2-1 and Nicaragua 2-0 to make the Gold Cup quarter-finals, before losing 5-1 to Costa Rica in front of 85,000 fans at Arlington's Cowboys Stadium.

Preferred choice

While France will remain the preferred choice for Guadeloupe-qualified players like Arsenal's William Gallas, the Gwada Boys offer an opportunity that might not otherwise arise for lower-league players.

Defender Miguel Comminges left Guadeloupe at 15 for a playing career that took in Amiens and Stade de Reims in France. In 2007, he moved to England, where he joined Swindon Town and went on to make his Guadeloupe debut at the Gold Cup.

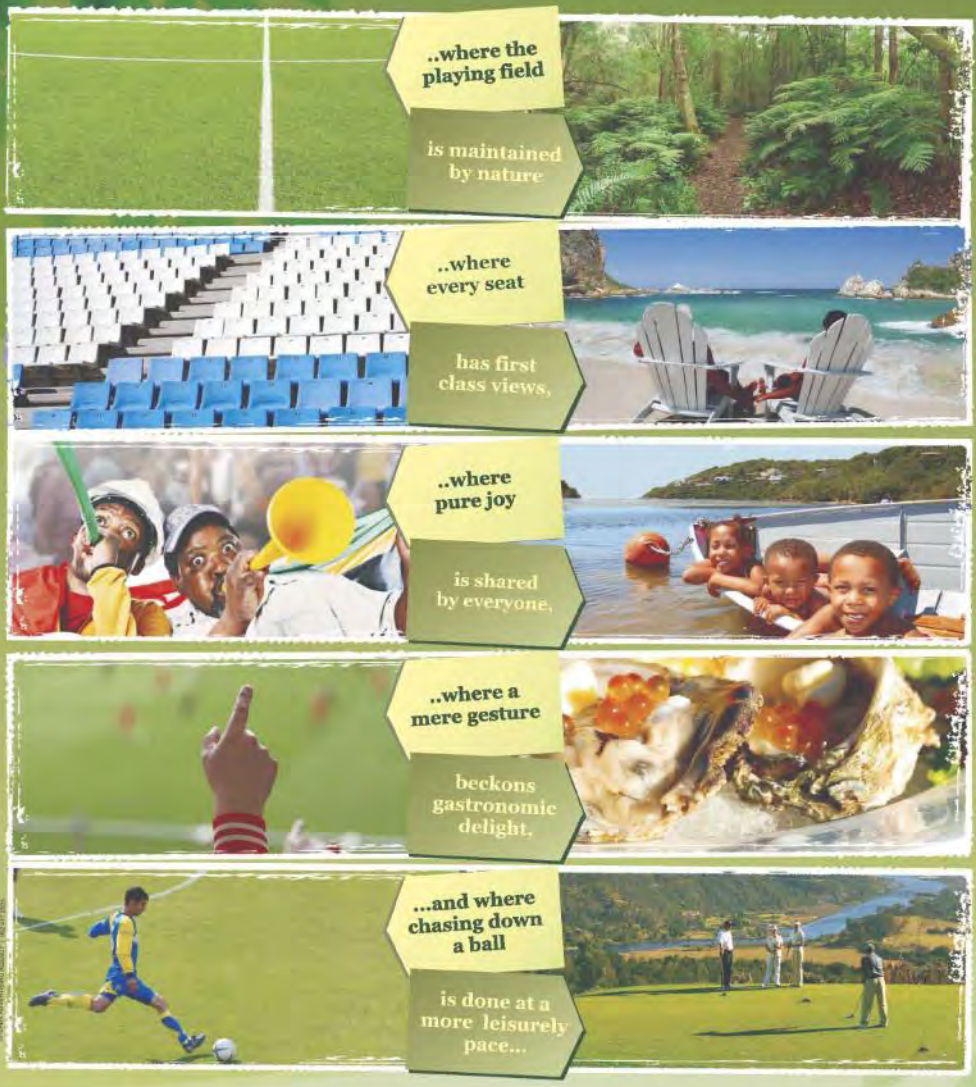
"I played in all the games," says Comminges, who is now at Cardiff City. "We expected to do better in 2009 because we went to the semi-finals last time, but to be in the quarter-finals, and play against teams like Mexico and Costa Rica, who have been at the World Cup, this is good.

"We could have other big names but they prefer to wait and try to play for France. There are many big players in Guadeloupe as it's the biggest sport on the island."

There are 140 clubs and 18,000 players on Guadeloupe and the LGF runs four leagues and a cup, with CS Moulien the reigning title holders. However, due to cost, Guadeloupe's champions eschew the CONCACAF Champions League and the island's four best sides play in a tournament against clubs from the neighbouring French territory of Martinique.

But the ambitious LGF hopes to change that. Plans are afoot to enter the CONCACAF Champions League soon and the LGF has even made a surprise bid to host this year's Caribbean Championship as the Gwada Boys chase their third consecutive Gold Cup appearance. ●

Knysna ...We're game, come *play!*



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The comeback kings

With the World Cup a matter of weeks away, a host of well-known names are plotting international recalls. Gavin Hamilton reports on the players who are returning to the international arena

Happy days...Ronaldinho hopes to be wearing the famous gold and green again this summer

IT WAS THE ultimate expression of modern player power. In January, Sweden's Zlatan Ibrahimovic announced he was "taking a break" from international football. The Barcelona forward will not play for the Swedish national team for the foreseeable future.

"I'm not motivated," he said. "I would be wasting energy for no reason, a sacrifice for nothing."

Barcelona will be his priority in 2010, while he takes time out from international football. "There are so many games with Barcelona and so many things to think about that I barely have time to think about the national team," he added.

Few people batted an eyelid at the announcement, which was made, ironically, during a press conference ahead of Barcelona's Champions League match against Dinamo Kyiv.

Such declarations are now commonplace. "I have no other choice," said Ruud Van Nistelrooy in August 2008 when announcing his retirement from Holland's national side. "The combination of the league, cup and Champions League games of Real Madrid, and the programme of the Dutch team, is too heavy a burden."

Paul Scholes took the politician's line when he quit England after Euro 2004, saying that he wanted to spend more time with his family – and Manchester United. "I wasn't enjoying it one little bit," he admitted in a rare interview in 2008.

Dida, Brazil's first-choice goalkeeper at the 2006 World Cup, did not formally announce his international retirement after the tournament, but coach Dunga admitted the player had rung him to say that he no longer wished to be considered for the national team.

Dida's Milan team-mate, Alessandro Nesta, was more forthright, telling a press conference in August 2006, three weeks after winning the World Cup with Italy: "My adventure in blue finishes here."

While the likes of Scholes and Nesta have retired from the national team in order to lengthen their club careers, others have quit in a fit of pique at not being selected on a regular basis.

Last year, Jamie Carragher admitted Fabio Capello had

Ronaldinho

Fitting in...can Dunga accommodate Ronaldinho?

Final fling for Brazil's forgotten star?

FOR almost three years Dunga carried Ronaldinho around in his Brazil squads, yet when the former FIFA World Player of the Year got on the field it was rarely a pretty sight. At times Ronaldinho gave the impression of an out-of-shape veteran who had come out of retirement for a charity match. His continued presence was undermining the coach's message of "the truth is on the pitch" and "the player selects himself" with his performance.

When Ronaldinho was dropped from the squad last year it was a case of Dunga being cruel to be kind. A huge believer in Ronaldinho's talent, he hoped that leaving him out would be the kick up the backside to snap him out of depression and force him to get fit.

And it seems to be working. The technique had never left him but, this season at Milan, Ronaldinho now looks slimmer and sharper, and capable once more of bringing his skill to bear on the game. He has clearly been motivated by the challenge. "I don't see myself sitting out the World Cup," he says.

Dunga is watching closely and in December he commented: "Ronaldinho makes a difference on the field when he's happy. For him football is happiness, not work. I'm also seeing him fighting, running, chasing after opponents. These are positive signs. Let's hope he keeps it up, remembering that in football the past doesn't count, only the present. The doors to the national team are not closed."

The team have done well in his absence. When he featured with Kaka and Robinho in a line behind striker Luis Fabiano, the three of them seemed to get in each other's way. Brazil have worked better since Ronaldinho was replaced by a mixed-function midfielder on the right.

An added complication is that Milan coach Leonardo has sought to recreate the 4-3-3 system in which Ronaldinho shone so brightly at Barcelona. But that is not how Brazil play, and even at his height he struggled to reproduce his best club form for his country.

Accommodating Ronaldinho and getting the best out of him is a problem for Dunga. But it is a problem 31 other World Cup coaches would love to have.

Tim Vickery

approached him about an England return, but the Liverpool defender remained unhappy at being a reserve to first-choice centre-backs John Terry and Rio Ferdinand.

"Maybe I would have won 10 more caps over the last couple of years because Rio and John have missed a few games," conceded Carragher.

> "Frustration with the coach is a familiar theme"

Negative outlook

France forward David Trezeguet quit *Les Bleus* after Euro 2008 in protest at the continued presence of national coach Raymond Domenech, who had not selected him for the finals. "The Euros were very negative, but what annoys me more is that Domenech is staying," he said.

Frustration with the coach is a familiar theme. Argentina's Juan Roman Riquelme has twice announced his international retirement: the first time after the 2006 World Cup, and then again last year in frustration at criticism from national coach Diego Maradona. "We don't share the same codes of ethics," Riquelme said. "While he is the coach of the national team, we can't work together."

Other players have been forced out by the fans. Neil Lennon, a catholic who was the subject of sectarian abuse when he captained Northern Ireland, quit international football after he received a death threat on the eve of a friendly match in 2002.

The financial circumstances of many of today's players means that they can afford to forego the "honour" of representing their country – and the financial benefits from sponsorship deals that often result. The aptly-named Stephen Ireland, who earns a reported £75,000 a week with Manchester City, has resisted calls

Good to be back...Figo (left) and Zidane both returned at the 2006 World Cup

to return to the Republic of Ireland squad after the furore over the player's concocted tale of dead grandparents.

Whereas once players referred to representing their country as a "duty", now they look for increasingly elaborate excuses to avoid international appearances.

In 1971 Pele became the first prominent player to stage a retirement from the national team. He played his last game for Brazil in the Maracana stadium in Rio de Janeiro, a passionate occasion when over 180,000 fans chanted "Stay! Stay!" Pele wept openly on the field – ample proof that saying good bye to the national team was a heart-rending decision.

Maybe the "spell" was broken as far back as 1978, when West Germany's Franz Beckenbauer and Holland's Johan Cruyff announced they would not be going to that year's World Cup, in Argentina. Beckenbauer and Cruyff had been the opposing captains in the 1974 World Cup Final, both were at the peak of their careers – but both chose to stay at home. No farewell games, no passionate crowds, no tears. Just matter-of-fact statements. Beckenbauer simply felt that he had nothing more to prove after winning in 1974, while Cruyff made cryptic references to Argentina's military junta.

Up until then, with the exception of Pele's retirement, international walkouts had tended to be the preserve of mavericks such as Paul Breitner, the Maoist left-back who quit West Germany's national team in 1975 only to return in time for the 1982 World Cup.

Yet for all the modern-day refuseniks who consider the international game beneath them, the past decade has witnessed a brand new phenomenon – the international comeback.

Zinedine Zidane led the way when he returned to help rescue France's faltering World Cup qualifying bid in September 2005. Little did he know that it would all end in such ignominy less than a year later.

Luis Figo was Portugal's most-capped player when he stepped down from international duty after losing the Final of Euro 2004. But barely a year later, spurred on by the thought of competing on the international stage for one last time, he returned to lead Portugal to the semi-finals of the 2006 World Cup, their best-ever performance.

The lure of playing in his first World Cup was enough to persuade Pavel Nedved to reverse his September 2004 decision to retire from the Czech Republic team. But after

> "For all the modern-day refuseniks who consider internationals beneath them, this decade has witnessed a brand new phenomenon with the international comeback"

Alessandro Nesta

In-form defender on Lippi's radar

IS Alessandro Nesta about to make a dramatic return to the World Cup fold? When Italy coach Marcello Lippi recently visited Milanello, everyone noticed that he sat down to lunch not only with Milan's Germany 06 heroes Andrea Pirlo, Gennaro Gattuso and Gianluca Zambrotta, but also with the 33-year-old, 78-times capped Nesta.

Zambrotta later confirmed one of the worst kept secrets in Italian football: namely that Lippi has asked Nesta to return to an Italy team for which he has not played since featuring in Italy's 2-0 2006 World Cup first-round win over the Czech Republic in Hamburg. After that game, Nesta picked up an injury which effectively ruled him out of the rest of the tournament. Since then, he has been in self-imposed international retirement, based, he says, on the need to harbour his energies.

Lippi's reasons for wanting Nesta back are obvious. For many years, Nesta, at his best, has been just about the most complete central defender in Italian football.

Right now, after missing out on almost the entire 2008-2009 season because of a serious back problem, which in the end required surgery, he seems to be back to his best.

Milan's main man...Nesta (right)

Until recently, however, he has appeared reluctant to come out of his "retirement", arguing that it would hardly be fair that he should take the place of someone who played throughout the South African qualifiers. Lippi has tried to reassure him on that front by saying that all the Italian senators would be glad to have him back in the team. It is a point underlined by Zambrotta, who adds: "Given the way Alessandro is playing at the moment, his terrific form, it would be a real shame not to have him in the team. I know he has scruples about this but he should understand that everybody wishes him well. He shouldn't create problems for himself about this, his return to the team would be welcomed by everybody."

One small question remains: if he does come back, then whose place does he take? Current Serie A form would suggest that the two best Italian central defenders of the moment are Juve's Giorgio Chiellini and Nesta.

So where does that leave Italy's "Captain Courageous", Fabio Cannavaro?

In reality, Lippi will almost certainly not drop Cannavaro but will see Nesta as luxury central defensive cover and someone who could step in alongside Cannavaro at the expense of Chiellini. Watch this space.

Paddy Agnew

Luxury cover...Nesta

Ruud Van Nistelrooy

Hamburg move prompts World Cup U-turn

DUTCH goal-machine Ruud van Nistelrooy has multiple points to prove after Real Madrid tore up his contract and allowed him to move on a free to a palpably-ecstatic Hamburg.

Not only will the former Heerenveen, PSV Eindhoven and Manchester United striker be looking to send a "perhaps you were wrong" message to the Real hierarchy, over the next few weeks and months he will also be on a World Cup 2010 mission, aiming to convince Holland coach Bert Van Marwijk he is worth a spot in his squad.

Van Nistelrooy announced his retirement from international football in the wake of his country's loss to Russia in a Euro 2008 quarter-final. But second thoughts were quick to resurface and, with his competitive instincts rekindled by his long lay-off, he is adamant he can be a factor in South Africa – which, incredibly for a player of his standing, will be only his second World Cup finals.

"Of course, my top priority is to play to a high standard for Hamburg and be successful with them," said Van Nistelrooy. "If all goes to plan, if I score regularly in the Bundesliga, then I hope the national coach will give me a call. I'm always excited by fresh challenges. It's what keeps me going.

"Playing again after such a bad injury, rediscovering my best form and going to the World Cup is a lot to ask, but I'm convinced I can do it."

Fitness will be the key as he has already suffered and fought back from two horrendous injuries to his right knee – snapped cruciate ligaments in 2000 while at PSV, and the meniscus he tore during a Champions League tie in November 2008 – and prior to his much-heralded arrival in the Bundesliga, he had only clocked up 127 minutes in the Real first team this season. Nor is ring-rustiness his sole complaint this winter. He has been labouring with a calf problem of late and on signing for Hamburg was not immediately available for selection.

"I'm sure I still have a few years left at the top," opined Van Nistelrooy in word-perfect German at his first Hamburg press conference. "The calf will mend soon, it's just a matter of time, two or three weeks, before I'm totally ready to show Hamburg fans what I can do. On the whole I've no doubts at all about making a successful comeback. The most important matter was to get my right knee absolutely right and thanks to my surgeon, Dr Richard Steadman, it certainly is. Physically I'm a new man.

"I hope to play in the World Cup in South Africa and the only way to make it happen is to play week in, week out at a good European level. I'm going to be Hamburg's main striker. Naturally, I don't have it in writing that I will start automatically but that's the feeling I had when I spoke with the coach Bruno Labbadia and members of the board.

"I've always been attracted to the Bundesliga. I loved watching German games on TV as a kid and for me, the German league is, along with the English and Spanish, one of the best. There are many strong sides and the stadia are spectacular and nearly always sold out."

Nick Bidwell

Point to prove...Van Nistelrooy

Fresh start...a new coach will help South Africa's McCarthy

Good health...Totti could make it if he stays fit

Difference of opinion... Riquelme has a problem with coach Maradona

appearing in the 2006 World Cup he rejected calls to return for Euro 2008.

Paolo Montero, who came back to captain Uruguay at the 2004 Copa America after retiring in 2002, and Dwight Yorke, who quit Trinidad & Tobago in 2001 only to return for the 2006 World Cup finals, are further examples of those who could not resist the international spotlight.

But the prize as the Frank Sinatra of international football goes to Sweden's Henrik Larsson, who made three retirements from the international arena before finally ending his career last year.

And now, with less than 120 days until the World Cup finals kicks off in South Africa, the comebacks are starting again.

Reintegration into the squad

For the hosts South Africa, Benni McCarthy looks set to return to the fold. The striker, newly signed by West Ham United, is South Africa's most-talented attacker but he has a tempestuous relationship with Bafana Bafana. However, the sacking of coach Joel Santana late last year should hasten McCarthy's reintegration into the squad.

Francesco Totti of Roma has hinted that he will be available for selection, injuries permitting, despite calling time on his Italy career in 2007, saying "my health is more important".

Nesta, Totti's international team-mate, is actively being courted by Marcello Lippi (see panel, page 45).

Riquelme continues to divide opinion in Argentina. The Boca Juniors playmaker is on record as saying that he expects to be spending this summer watching the World Cup on television as he remains aggrieved at Maradona's criticism of him. Yet there remains a sizeable lobby in Argentina, including federation president Julio Grondona, who would welcome his presence in the squad.

Ruud Van Nistelrooy's recent move to Hamburg was accompanied by a declaration that he was too hasty in leaving the international scene (see panel, left), while former team-mate Edwin Van der Sar continues to resist speculation that he too will return.

Van der Sar answered an emergency call from coach Bert Van Marwijk during Holland's World Cup qualifying campaign when regular

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keepers Maarten Stekelenburg and Henk Timmer were both injured. But he insists that the return was temporary and that he will not add to his record 103 caps.

Holland will be led this summer by Mark Van Bommel, who refused to play under coach Marco Van Basten at Euro 2008, but has returned to play for Van Marwijk – who also happens to be his father-in-law.

And the return to form of the greatest player of the past decade, Ronaldinho, suggests that he could yet play a major role for Brazil in South Africa (see panel, page 44).

Extra dimension

When faced with deciding between an experienced veteran and a younger wild card, national coaches have a history of opting for experience. "You're looking for that player who may not be in form, but who adds that extra dimension to the squad," says Roy Hodgson, the Fulham manager who was in charge of Switzerland at the 1994 World Cup.

At the last World Cup, Sven Goran Eriksson's selection of uncapped 17-year-old Theo Walcott was a gamble that backfired for England.

That experience can only harden the belief of experienced veterans like Michael Owen, David Beckham and Patrick Vieira that there will be space for them on the planes to South Africa.

Owen admitted in a recent interview he still has hopes of making England's World Cup squad. "I make sure I'm in a mindset that if I did have to pack my bags to go to South Africa I'd be right with it," he said.

With his loan move to Milan, Beckham has demonstrated, at the age of 35, that advancing years need not be a barrier to continued international ambition. Vieira's recent transfer to Manchester City was undertaken in the belief, however misguided, that he still has something to offer France.

It is not just in Europe that players are plotting their international comebacks. Robinho hopes his return to Santos will maintain his place in the Brazil side and he will be playing in the Brazilian championship alongside the likes of Roberto Carlos, Ronaldo and Adriano, who all hold out hopes of being recalled by Dunga.

Their chances of playing in South Africa may be slim, but they are offered hope by the recent case of Argentina's Martin Palermo (see panel, right), who was recalled for last autumn's World Cup qualifiers after an absence of more than a decade.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic is unlikely to be missing from Sweden's line-up for quite so long. ●

Helping hand...Van der Sar has answered his country's call already

> "Faced with an experienced veteran or a younger wild card, coaches have a history of opting for experience"

Still hoping...Owen has not given up on the 2010 World Cup

Martin Palermo

Boca veteran hoping for World Cup miracle

ON a freezing afternoon in Paraguay, Martin Palermo missed three penalties in one 1999 Copa America game against Colombia. The big striker may have been ridiculed all over the world, but this was the day he won the undying admiration of Diego Maradona.

Their paths had crossed before. Two years earlier, Maradona had successfully implored the Boca Juniors directors to buy Palermo from Estudiantes. For Maradona, that Copa America match was a vindication of his judgement. What courage Palermo had! What force of character! There was no hiding, no fear of looking ridiculous. Palermo was indeed "the optimist of the goal," as club coach Carlos Bianchi had nicknamed him, anxious to live up to his responsibilities even at the toughest time. This was a man who could be counted on in a crisis.

A decade later, with Maradona now at the helm, Argentina were indeed in crisis, scrapping for every point in the quest to qualify for South Africa. They had plenty of little nippy strikers, but a lack of target man types. And so back came Palermo.

The Boca centre-forward was an unused substitute in September's 3-1 home defeat by Brazil. Then, four days later he was back in international action, off the bench with half an hour to go in the next round away to Paraguay – 10 years and two months after his previous game for Argentina.

The following month, at home to Peru, he was on at half-time.

Peru grabbed an 89th-minute equaliser, but as a torrential storm hammered down on Buenos Aires, Palermo transformed Maradona from King Lear to Gene Kelly. Instead of raging in the storm, Argentina's coach was singing and sliding in the rain as Palermo turned in the 93rd-minute winner from close range.

"It was a miracle from Saint Palermo," said Maradona after the game. And could another miracle get Palermo on the plane to South Africa? The coach concedes that it is possible.

The striker always looked too lumbering to shine in top-class football, even when theoretically at his peak. Now, at the age of 36, he moves with the ungainly gait of a man wading thigh deep in water.

So, is he worth taking as an option on the bench; a penalty-area talisman to bring on for late assaults?

If Uruguay can use Sebastian Abreu in a similar role, perhaps there is still a World Cup miracle to come from Saint Palermo.

Tim Vickery

Target man...Palermo (centre) causes problems for Ghana

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50 TRANSFERS

In the second feature in our series celebrating *World Soccer*'s 50th anniversary,

GEORGE EASTHAM

NEWCASTLE UNITED TO ARSENAL, 1960

Eastham fell out with Newcastle in 1960 and requested a move to Arsenal. However, the Magpies would not let him go and held onto his registration. At the time, clubs could keep a player's registration (thereby stopping him from joining another club) and not pay him if he had requested a transfer. Eastham appealed to the Football League in vain and then went on strike. Eventually, Newcastle caved in and let him go to Highbury for £47,500, but Eastham was still unhappy. Claiming restraint of trade, he took his case to the High Court in 1963 and won – so starting what is now regarded as freedom of contract.

LUIS SUAREZ

BARCELONA TO INTERNAZIONALE, 1961

Inter set the first world-record transfer of the 1960s when they tempted Luis Suarez from Barcelona for a fee of £152,000, beating the previous highest of £93,000 paid by Juventus to River Plate for Omar Sivori. The move saw Suarez link up again with his former coach at Barca, Helenio Herrera.

GERRY HITCHENS

ASTON VILLA TO INTERNAZIONALE, 1961

Of all the British stars (Jimmy Greaves, Denis Law, Joe Baker) who moved to Serie A in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Hitchens outlasted them all, staying in Italy for nine years – a record for a British player that still stands. He initially signed for Inter and would later also play for Torino, Atalanta and Cagliari.

JOHN CHARLES

JUVENTUS TO LEEDS UNITED TO ROMA, 1962

A huge figure for Leeds in the 1950s, the big Welshman was an instant hit when he joined Juventus in 1957. At the age of 31, after five successful years in Turin, he returned to Leeds in 1962. However, he could not settle and, later that year, he was on the plane back to Italy, signing for Roma before injuries took their toll and curtailed his career in the English lower leagues.

> "Hitchens stayed in Italy for nine years, a record for a British player that still stands"

LUIS DEL SOL

REAL MADRID TO JUVENTUS, 1962

Anticipating that they were going to sign Pele from Santos, Real Madrid agreed to sell Del Sol, a member of their 1960 European Cup-winning side, to Juventus for a world-record £198,000. But the tactic backfired when Pele stayed in Brazil.

ANGELO SORMANI

MANTOVA TO ROMA, 1963

Sormani became the most expensive player in the world when he was sold by Mantova for £250,000 in 1963. He spent just one disappointing season at Roma, scoring six times in 25 games, before moving on to Sampdoria where he had an even worse record. Eventually, he settled down and succeeded at Milan.

THAT CHANGED FOOTBALL

World Soccer Magazine 50 Years 1960 - 2010

we select the most exciting and important club transfers of the past 50 years

Words: Duncan Bond

GARRINCHA

BOTAFOGO TO CORINTHIANS, 1966

The size of the fee – £33,500 was a huge amount for a Brazilian club to pay for a 33-year-old considered past his prime – was more surprising than the move itself. Garrincha had been at loggerheads with Botafogo since they stalled on his wage claim in 1963. When he went on strike, they were forced to sell – although a larger offer from rivals Santos was rejected.

PIETRO ANASTASI

VARESE TO JUVENTUS, 1968

Sicily-born Anastasi set a world record when he joined Juventus from Varese for £500,000 after just one season in Serie A. He spent eight years at Juve, scoring 78 league goals, 29 of which came in his first two seasons there.

JOHAN CRUYFF

AJAX TO BARCELONA, 1973

After leading Ajax to three successive European Cups, Cruyff signed for Barcelona and linked up once again with his mentor, coach Rinus Michels. The transfer fee was £922,300, of which Cruyff received nearly half, and in his first season he helped Barca to win their first La Liga title since 1960.

Champion...Cruyff

GUNTER NETZER

BORUSSIA MONCHENGLADBACH TO REAL MADRID, 1973

A reactionary signing by Madrid president Santiago Bernabeu following Barcelona's capture of Johan Cruyff. In wanting to keep up with their rivals, Real signed one of the biggest mavericks in football at the time.

> "Paul Breitner caused a sensation when he joined Real Madrid for £420,000"

PAUL BREITNER

BAYERN MUNICH TO REAL MADRID, 1974

Amid rumours that, at the age of 22, he was set to quit football to work with handicapped children and various charities, the World Cup and European Cup-winning West Germany full-back caused a sensation when he joined Real Madrid for £420,000. Along with Gunter Netzer, signed the previous year, he helped the club win two Spanish titles in his first two seasons at Madrid.

GIUSEPPE SAVOLDI

BOLOGNA TO NAPOLI, 1975

Cost a new world record of £1.2million when he joined Napoli. In so doing he became the first two-billion-lira player in Italian football and the first to move for over £1m. Made more than 100 appearances for Napoli before returning to Bologna four years later.

PELE

SEMI-RETIREMENT TO NEW YORK COSMOS, 1975

He was past his prime but Pele is credited with kick-starting the old North American Soccer League. He had retired in 1972 after a 17-year career with Santos. He returned with Cosmos on a $3million salary and helped a team containing legends such as Franz Beckenbauer and Carlos Alberto to the NASL title in 1977.

FABIO CAPELLO

JUVENTUS TO MILAN, 1976

Capello had been a key midfielder for perennial title challengers Juventus for six years. So when he returned from holiday to find he had been transferred to Milan, who had not won the *sculetto* for eight years, he was stunned. "When I left for Turkey for a holiday I was one of the best midfielders in the championship, a fixture in the national team, a boy who was on top of the world," he told *World Soccer* in 1976. "Now I come back and almost overnight I've been thrown around like a novice."

> "Now I've come back and I've been thrown around like a novice"
>
> *Fabio Capello*

Anastasi goes to Inter... Capello leaves Juventus

KEVIN KEEGAN

LIVERPOOL TO HAMBURG, 1977

After helping Liverpool win their first European Cup in 1977, Keegan became the first English star to play in the Bundesliga. Nicknamed "Mighty Mouse" by fans, he ended the season as European Player of the Year – a feat he repeated the following year, along with a first Bundesliga title for Hamburg after a 19-year wait.

KENNY DALGLISH

CELTIC TO LIVERPOOL, 1977

The big question following Kevin Keegan's departure to Germany was how would Liverpool replace what many considered the irreplaceable? Manager Bob Paisley had the answer and stunned the football world with a British record fee of £440,000 for Celtic and Scotland striker Dalglish.

OSSIE ARDILES & RICKY VILLA

ARGENTINA TO TOTTENHAM, 1978

Within two months of winning the World Cup, two of Argentina's squad, Ardiles (above right) and Villa (left), were in London joining Tottenham Hotspur. For South Americans to play anywhere in Europe then was rare; in England it was virtually unheard of.

PAOLO ROSSI

JUVENTUS TO VICENZA, 1978

Co-owned by Vicenza and Juventus, the two clubs had to submit sealed bids for the other's half-share. Vicenza offered £1.5million, confident they would not be successful, but when Juve only bid £1m Vicenza had to sell other players to afford the fee. As they slid inexorably to relegation and bankruptcy, Rossi was loaned to Perugia and later signed by Juventus.

TREVOR FRANCIS

BIRMINGHAM CITY TO NOTTINGHAM FOREST, 1979

English football's first £1million player when Brian Clough signed him for league champions Forest in February. Within four months he had scored the winning goal in the European Cup Final against Malmo.

DIEGO MARADONA

ARGENTINOS JUNIORS TO BOCA JUNIORS, 1981

Aged 20, Maradona moved across Buenos Aires and signed for Boca Juniors on loan. The deal also included Boca settling two Argentinos debts totalling $1.5million and giving them four first-team players, plus two more on loan. The deal was thought to be worth some $2m to Maradona for a 16-month contract.

LOTHAR MATTHAUS

BORUSSIA MONCHENGLADBACH TO BAYERN MUNICH, 1984

One of the most controversial transfers in the history of German football. In his last game before the move – the German Cup Final against Bayern – Matthaus missed a penalty in his team's shoot-out defeat.

DIEGO MARADONA

BARCELONA TO NAPOLI, 1984

After two years an unhappy Maradona left Barcelona. A bout of hepatitis and a broken leg didn't help but the catalyst for his transfer was a falling out with club president Josep Lluis Nunez, after which he demanded an exit from Camp Nou. For a world record fee of £6.9million he signed for Serie A club Napoli. He was paraded in front of 80,000 Neapolitans when he signed. Within three years Maradona had led Napoli to their first ever *scudetto*.

"It's best for me to leave Barcelona without creating any waves or saying anything critical," he told *World Soccer* in August 1984. "I must say, though, that it is only because we are civilised people that, at one of the meetings with the Barcelona directors, we didn't come to blows."

DIEGO'S NAPOLI MANIA!

> "It's only because we are civilised people that we didn't come to blows"
>
> *Maradona*

LUIS FERNANDEZ

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN TO MATRA RACING, 1986

International midfielder Luis Fernandez sensationally left for Matra Racing in a move that was significant not just because he left for another Paris club – it also sparked an explosion in French player wages.

RUUD GULLIT, FRANK RIJKAARD AND MARCO VAN BASTEN

DUTCH FOOTBALL TO MILAN, 1987 AND 1988

The most successful period in Milan's history coincided with the signing of three Dutch superstars. Van Basten (above right) arrived from Ajax, Gullit (left) from PSV and, a year later, Rijkaard (centre) from Real Zaragoza, where he had been on loan from Sporting Lisbon after walking out of Ajax. Together they inspired Milan to the Serie A title in their first season and two successive European Cups.

LOTHAR MATTHAUS & ANDREAS BREHME

BAYERN MUNICH TO INTERNAZIONALE, 1988

The balance of power in Europe was with Italian clubs and, after Milan's capture of Gullit and Van Basten in 1987, Inter decided to follow their neighbours by snapping up Matthaus (below right) and Brehme (left) from Bayern. The impact was immediate as Inter won their first *scudetto* for nine years – and the following year both players were to have key roles as West Germany won the World Cup on Italian soil.

MO JOHNSTON

NANTES TO RANGERS, 1989

Having spent two years at Nantes, catholic Mo Johnston announced that he would be rejoining Celtic as they were "the only club I want to play for". He was even photographed in a Celtic shirt with Hoops manager Billy McNeill. Yet two months later Graeme Souness was parading Johnston at Ibrox. It infuriated fans on both sides of Glasgow. For Celtic fans it was the ultimate betrayal, while for Rangers supporters there was an element of deep mistrust that a confirmed Celtic fan and catholic to boot had joined their club.

> "Baggio said he was 'compelled to accept the transfer' but it caused Fiorentina fans to riot"

JEAN-MARC BOSMAN

RFC LIEGE TO DUNKIRK, 1990

The proposed transfer that changed everything. The striker had seen out his contract, rejected a new deal at RFC Liege and agreed to join Dunkirk. The two clubs agreed a fee, but Dunkirk walked away when Liege later upped their valuation. Bosman sued RFC Liege and the Belgian FA in the European Court and won, with the Court ruling that, as he was out of contract, he should be free to change clubs. It allowed today's players to cash in by running down their contracts.

ROBERTO BAGGIO

FIORENTINA TO JUVENTUS, 1990

The darling of the *Viola* outraged fans when he joined Juventus, who had just beaten Fiorentina in the UEFA Cup Final, for a world record fee of £8million. Baggio said he "was compelled to accept the transfer" but it caused Fiorentina fans to riot. When the two clubs met in the spring in Florence, Baggio declined to take a penalty for Juventus. He was later substituted and, on leaving the field, picked up a Fiorentina scarf and kissed it to a standing ovation from the locals.

He told *World Soccer* in June 1990: "I did everything I could to remain in Florence but I understood that I had become a burden to the club and wanted to end this situation."

JEAN-PIERRE PAPIN

MARSEILLE TO MILAN, 1992

The most high-profile French player to move to Italy since Michel Platini joined Juventus in 1982. Top scorer for five successive seasons at Marseille, Papin found it hard to live up to his world record £10million fee. He was in and out of the side and suffered several injuries. In May, he came on as a sub for Milan in the Champions League Final – a game they lost 1-0...to Marseille.

"I came to Milan to play," he told *World Soccer* in October 1992. "I didn't pick Milan to play 45 minutes every now and then."

ERIC CANTONA

LEEDS UNITED TO MANCHESTER UNITED, 1992

Having helped Leeds to the title one season after their return to the top flight, he was controversially sold to their bitter rivals, thus beginning the most successful chapter in the history of Manchester United.

GIANLUIGI LENTINI

TORINO TO MILAN, 1992

Juventus had also wanted to buy the 24-year-old from their Turin rivals – much to the displeasure of Torino fans, who stormed the club's headquarters – but many were still shocked when Lentini joined Milan for a world record fee of £13million. He helped Milan to the league title, but was then involved in a car crash that left him in a coma for more than 24 hours. Despite a full recovery, he returned to Torino four years later at a loss to Milan of £11million.

MICHAEL LAUDRUP

BARCELONA TO REAL MADRID, 1994

He helped Barca to four titles and a European Cup under Johan Cruyff. When Cruyff dropped him for the 1994 Champions League Final defeat to Milan, he made the controversial move to Real Madrid, helping them break Barca's La Liga stranglehold.

ALAN SHEARER

BLACKBURN ROVERS TO NEWCASTLE UNITED, 1996

Newcastle became the first English club for 68 years to set a world record fee when they paid Blackburn £15million for the England striker. The lure of his hometown club was irresistible for Shearer, and for the second time he turned down a move to Manchester United. At Newcastle he ended up winning nothing. "I did always want to play for Newcastle when I was a kid on the terraces," he told *World Soccer* in March 1997. "I had this sense that one day, I would go home to play for Newcastle."

Next stop
Monaco

RONALDO

BARCELONA TO INTERNAZIONALE, 1997

After a dispute between both clubs and the player's advisors, he signed for Inter for a world record fee of £19.5million. Had an instant impact, finishing second in the scoring charts and helping Inter win the UEFA Cup.

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DENILSON

SAO PAULO TO REAL BETIS, 1998

After showing promising form for Brazil in a pre-1998 World Cup tournament in France, Denilson arrived at La Liga strugglers Betis from Sao Paulo (and a poor World Cup finals) for a world record fee of £21.5million but failed to show his worth. Within two years of his arrival, Betis were relegated.

CHRISTIAN VIERI

LAZIO TO INTERNAZIONALE, 1999

Signed by his former Juventus boss Marcello Lippi from Lazio, Vieri was at his peak. He linked up well with Ronaldo until injuries curtailed both their seasons, but at a world record £32million, over five years, Inter got their money's worth.

"[Lazio president Sergio] Cragnotti sold me to make money," he told *World Soccer* in November 1999. "It's a very difficult thing to say no to an offer of that kind."

NICOLAS ANELKA

ARSENAL TO REAL MADRID, 1999

Arsenal had signed Anelka from Paris Saint-Germain as a 17-year-old for £500,000 in 1997 and he helped Arsenal win the league-and-cup double in 1998. When he left for Real Madrid at the age of 20, the Gunners made a profit of almost £22million.

LIONEL MESSI

NEWELL'S OLD BOYS TO BARCELONA, 2000

Signed for Barcelona after they agreed to pay his health bills (he suffered from a growth-hormone deficiency from the age of 11). Prior to that he was poised to join River Plate, but they could not afford the $800 per month for the treatment. Barcelona had seen him play and showed interest in him, and Messi's family agreed to Barca picking up the cost. He moved there at the age of 13 and the rest is history.

HERNAN CRESPO

PARMA TO LAZIO, 2000

With money in the bank from the previous season's sale of Christian Vieri to Inter, reigning Italian champions Lazio forked out a new record of £35.5million for striker Hernan Crespo. The Argentinian international repaid the fee by finishing top scorer in Serie A with 26 goals.

TRANSFER SPECIAL
Crespo joins the record breaker

LUIS FIGO

BARCELONA TO REAL MADRID, 2000

One of the most controversial transfers of recent times. Real Madrid president Florentino Perez lured Luis Figo from Barcelona for a world record £37million, so starting the galactico era. Figo himself had doubts about the move and initially probably wished he hadn't. On his first return to Camp Nou he had a pig's head thrown at him by angry Barca fans.

"It was difficult deciding to move from Barcelona to Real Madrid, but my conscience is clear," he told *World Soccer* in September 2000.

> "On his return to Camp Nou, Figo had a pig's head thrown at him by fans"

ZINEDINE ZIDANE

JUVENTUS TO REAL MADRID, 2001

Football's £40million mark was breached when Zinedine Zidane joined Real Madrid. Once again it was Florentino Perez who signed the cheque, paying £9million more than when he signed Luis Figo 12 months earlier. Each year for the previous five years, the world record fee had been broken, rising from £15million in 1996 to £46million. It would be another eight years before it would rise again.

> "Each year, for the previous five years, the world record fee was broken, rising from £15m in 1996 to £46m"

CARLOS TEVEZ

BOCA JUNIORS TO CORINTHIANS, 2004

The biggest transfer fee ever negotiated between two South American clubs. Tevez, then aged 20, left Argentinian side Boca for Corinthians of Brazil for £13.7million. The Brazilian club had been taken over by investment company Media Sports Investments (MSI) in a controversial 10-year deal that granted them a control of the club in return for substantial investments. Tevez was the first of those investments, signing a £6.85m contract for five years.

NIKO KRANJCAR

DINAMO ZAGREB TO HAJDUK SPLIT, 2005

After falling out with the Dinamo hierarchy, Kranjcar signed for their arch rivals, Hajduk Split, for £1.2million. For Dinamo fans it was pure betrayal. The move had been arranged by Kranjcar's agent, Dino Pokrovac, in January 2005. In May, the agent was found shot dead.

GIANLUIGI BUFFON

PARMA TO JUVENTUS, 2001

Nearly tripled the world record fee for a goalkeeper when he joined Juventus in 2001 for £32million. That record still stands nearly 10 years later.

CARLOS TEVEZ & JAVIER MASCHERANO

CORINTHIANS TO WEST HAM UNITED, 2006

Comparisons with Tottenham's signing of Ardiles and Villa 28 years earlier were inevitable when West Ham announced the signing of Argentinian duo Tevez and Mascherano from Corinthians of Brazil. The deal was engineered by Kia Joorabchian, who owned the players' contracts (through MSI) and was attempting a takeover of the east London club. But when the Hammers were sold to an Icelandic firm, questions followed as to who actually owned the players. Neither player settled at first and by January 2007 Mascherano had moved to Liverpool. Tevez, however, saw his form improve and he virtually kept West Ham in the Premiership single-handedly with a barrage of late-season goals, including the winner at Manchester United on the last day of the season. "They [Ardiles and Villa] were two big stars in English football and hopefully we can achieve something similar," Tevez told *World Soccer* in November 2006.

DAVID BECKHAM

REAL MADRID TO LOS ANGELES GALAXY, 2007

After four years in Spain with Real Madrid (and prior to that 10 years in the Premier League with Manchester United), Beckham announced that the next club he would play for would be....Los Angeles Galaxy in the MLS. In a move that drew similarities with Pele signing for New York Cosmos 32 years earlier, Beckham agreed a five-year deal reportedly worth £128million. For those running MLS, it was hoped Beckham would be the catalyst for an influx of star names, but three years on that has failed to materialise.

> "It was hoped Beckham would be the catalyst for an influx of star names to follow...but that has failed to materialise"

ROBINHO

REAL MADRID TO MANCHESTER CITY, 2008

Despite wanting – and expecting – to sign for Chelsea, Robinho found himself as the first marquee signing of the new Arab regime running Manchester City. The Brazil star moved for £32.5million, on wages of around £160,000 per week, after City offered Real more money than Chelsea. Robinho looked like he would quickly repay that fee with three goals in his first three games, but the honeymoon soon ended. In January 2010, he returned to his former club Santos on loan.

KAKA

MILAN TO REAL MADRID, 2009

Eight years after Real Madrid last broke the world transfer record, Kaka became the first of the "new galacticos" for a new world record fee of £56million and, in his second stint at the Real helm, newly installed president Florentino Perez was again the signatory on the cheque. Kaka, having not wanted to leave Milan, had turned down Manchester City six months earlier, but at the end of the 2008-09 season he decided that it was time to move on.

CRISTIANO RONALDO

MANCHESTER UNITED TO REAL MADRID, 2009

A staggering £80million shattered the world transfer record (which was set only a week earlier when Real Madrid signed Kaka) as the Portuguese star moved from Old Trafford to the Bernabeu. The player Real had courted for over a year eventually decided the time was right to leave England and Manchester United.

ZLATAN IBRAHIMOVIC & SAMUEL ETO'O

INTERNAZIONALE TO BARCELONA/ BARCELONA TO INTER, 2009

European champions Barcelona paid what amounted to £40million plus Samuel Eto'o for Swedish striker Ibrahimovic. Within a month of the transfer going through, both players lined up against each other in the Champions League for their respective new clubs and honours were shared in a goalless draw. In the return game, Eto'o received a standing ovation from 95,000 Camp Nou fans but Inter, minus the injured Ibrahimovic, triumphed 2-0.

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BRAZIL

Julio Cesar The *Selecao*'s undisputed no1

National saviour...Julio Cesar has silenced the critics

IT IS HARD to think of a position in sport that carries the same pressure as keeping goal for Brazil in a World Cup.

While there is often little to do, there is even less margin for error. Do it badly and the hopes of an entire nation crash from a height unmatched anywhere else.

Moacir Barbosa, for example, never lived down the goal he conceded at his near post that gave Uruguay the 1950 World Cup. Back then there were only 50 million Brazilians to let down; there will be over 190 million when Julio Cesar takes on the responsibility in South Africa.

When he first made his name with Rio club Flamengo, few felt Julio Cesar would get this far in the game. Although a gifted and athletic shot-stopper, he was unsure on crosses, prone to giving away too many rebounds, made several high-profile blunders and had questionable mental strength – which clearly made him uncomfortable when rival fans pointed out his wife was an ex-girlfriend of Ronaldo.

But the 30-year-old has gone on to prove everyone wrong. A stalwart with Internazionale, he has become one of the star names in the Brazil side, trusted to stand up and be counted when the going gets tough.

A key moment in his rise was the 2004 Copa America in Peru. Part of an experimental Brazil side that came back with the trophy, his error gifted Uruguay the lead in the semi-final. One of the real tests of a goalkeeper is how he responds to making a mistake – and Julio Cesar's reaction was impressive. His save in the penalty shoot-out sent his country into the Final with Argentina, where he was in superb form both in normal time and in another shoot-out.

Brazil produce so many top players – and these days that includes goalkeepers – that opportunities in the national team have to be grabbed. Julio Cesar seized his chance at the Copa America and he was then taken to the 2006 World Cup for experience, putting him in pole position for South Africa.

When Dunga took over as coach after Germany 06 he took a look at several other goalkeepers in his early friendlies and, with Julio Cesar injured, he won the 2007 Copa America with Doni in goal.

But come the World Cup qualifiers, Julio Cesar was his first choice – and he was magnificent from first to last in the 18-game campaign.

By now, Brazil's no1 was so fortified with European success and full of confidence that he seemed to fill the goal.

Headlines were made all over the world last year when Argentina went down 6-1 to Bolivia at altitude and it could easily have happened to Brazil in Ecuador a few days earlier. But they managed a 1-1 draw solely because Julio Cesar was immense – as he was again in Montevideo when Brazil beat Uruguay 4-0. That may sound a comprehensive scoreline, but had the keepers swapped places it could have been a different story.

He has proved everyone wrong and become a star of the Brazil side

In a team that likes to defend deep and then counter-attack, an off day for the keeper could be catastrophic. Julio Cesar's recent form suggests that will be very unlikely in South Africa.

Tim Vickery

ARGENTINA
Juan Sebastian Veron

South America's player of the year seeks to end career on a high

EVERYTHING Barcelona's Lionel Messi touched at club level in 2009 may have turned to gold but Juan Sebastian Veron wasn't too far behind his countryman, leading Estudiantes to the Libertadores Cup and retaining his personal crown as South America's footballer of the year.

Now the pair are set to combine as Argentina go in search of World Cup success this summer. But while Messi has youth on his side, the Estudiantes captain, who turns 35 in March, will need to pace himself carefully in South Africa – and at least he will no longer be burdened with carrying the hopes of a nation all on his own.

In 2002 the all-action Veron, then a Manchester United player, was the lynchpin in Marcelo Bielsa's team and Argentina's World Cup hopes lay firmly on his shoulders. However, failure to get through the group stage led to fans turning against the perceived villain.

It was a long, hard slog to win back those fans, but Veron has done so to the extent that, eight years on, Argentina look to him as much as they do the world's top player, Messi.

That so much is expected of Messi should, however, be good for Veron and should Argentina fail he will not, surely, be the scapegoat again. This time, that fate could well fall to coach Diego Maradona if he fails to find the right partners for Veron.

Coming back to Estudiantes in 2006 after a decade in Europe, Veron has already achieved most of the goals he set himself by winning the Libertadores Cup – a competition his father, Juan Ramon Veron, won three times with Estudiantes.

Veron junior is a huge figure at the club, with Estudiantes coach Alex Sabella – who won two domestic league titles with the team as a player in the early 1980s – calling him "the outstanding player in the history of Estudiantes de La Plata" and *La Nacion* columnist Juan Pablo Varsky arguing that Veron is a unique case of a player meaning so much to a club. "Sebastian influences all aspects of life at Estudiantes: on the pitch, in the changing room, among the fans and the board," Varsky claimed.

Argentina look to Veron as much as they do the world's top player, Messi

An example of Veron's importance can be seen in Estudiantes' new gymnasium – which was inspired by the gym at La Pinetina, the training facility of Veron's last club in Italy, Internazionale, and paid for by the man himself.

There has been talk of Veron returning to Manchester to play for United's rivals City, under his former Lazio team-mate and Inter coach Roberto Mancini, but World Cup success is Veron's greatest challenge at the moment – something that would be the icing on the cake before he ultimately begins a new phase of his career behind the scenes at Estudiantes.

Rex Gowar

Influential... Veron remains a pivotal figure for club and country

PORTUGAL
Bruno Alves

Foot soldier ready to give his all as he prepares for battle against paternal ancestors

THE World Cup clash between Portugal and Brazil in Durban on June 25 will be an extra special occasion for the former's central defensive colossus, Bruno Alves – a player whose links to South America's largest nation run strong and deep.

Indeed, when it comes to sport, the bloodline of the Porto stopper is 100 per cent Brazilian. His father, Washington, was a centre-back for top Rio side Flamengo before emigrating to Portugal – where he turned out for Espinho, Varzim and Rio Ave – while his uncle Geraldo was an attacking virtuoso for Flamengo and Brazil in the late 1970s. A good friend of the young Zico, Geraldo sadly never had the glittering career he deserved, suffering cardiac arrest during an appendix operation and passing away at the age of just 22.

"Obviously, because of my family history, I do feel a little Brazilian, but I've followed a different path and I'm more than content to be Portuguese," says Alves. "I was born, raised and educated in this country, my parents' home is in this part of the world and my roots are here.

"I lived in Brazil for a year, around the age of five, but that's as far as it goes. There is no question about my allegiance.

"I'm always extremely proud to pull on the Portuguese shirt and will do anything to defend my nation's honour."

And what a good job the 28-year-old is making of it. An international late starter who won his first cap just two-and-a-half years ago and only established himself as an automatic choice during the 2010 qualifying campaign, he approaches every game with the sort of physical intensity and uncompromising attitude few can muster.

Watching Alves in full-blooded action these days, one would be tempted to laugh at the suggestion that he has mellowed, that he operates with much more self-control than he used to. Yet it certainly is the case.

Once compared to Italy's Marco Materazzi for his penchant for the ugly and the gratuitous – such as the infamous head-butt on Benfica striker Nuno Gomes which earned him a red card back in 2005 – he has wisely ditched the aggression-unlimited pose.

Although technically he may have his flaws, the fact of the matter is that Alves is not in the side to dazzle with finesse. Thumping tackles, totally committed aerial challenges and a willingness to put his body on the line are what he specialises in. And, to complete the picture of the gladiator, he is hardly ever injured – in the calendar year of 2009 he did not miss a single game for Porto in either domestic or Champions League action.

Renowned for an ability to score for Porto from set-pieces, he was to prove similarly decisive en route to South Africa: heading an injury-time winner in the 2-1 victory in Albania, then stealing forward to nod home the only goal in the first-leg of the play-off game against Bosnia.

"In a team blessed with more than its share of ability and imagination, you need foot soldiers – and Bruno Alves is one of the best, " says former Portugal centre-back Eurico. "He'll move heaven and earth to keep the back door locked and has a knack for scoring key goals.

"What more do you want?"

Nick Bidwell

"I lived in Brazil for a year but there is no question about my allegiance"

National pride...Alves is totally committed to the Portuguese cause

MEXICO
Guillermo Ochoa

"Memo" has reminded Mexico of his star quality

DESPITE being only 24, Guillermo Ochoa has had to wait quite some time to be an undisputed starter in the national team. Ever since Leo Beenhakker noticed him in a youth-team game and handed the 18-year-old his senior debut for Club America – who are arguably the biggest team in Mexico – the curly-haired keeper has been considered his country's most important talent in years.

However, winning a starting place with *El Tricolor* was far more difficult. First, he had to fight the mistrust of four different managers who were not eager to give a teenager a chance in perhaps the only position in which Mexico has never suffered from a lack of options.

When Ochoa shot to fame in 2004, one of the national side's star turns was Oswaldo Sanchez, an old-school keeper who was tall and strong, with safe hands. During Ricardo Lavolpe's tenure as Mexico coach, the starting XI was composed of Sanchez plus 10 others, so the youngster had to settle for a place on the bench at the 2006 World Cup.

But not even that was easy. In the years since his debut, Ochoa had become the idol of the Mexican football media. He was young, charismatic, incredibly talented and played in a club owned by Televisa, the largest media outlet in Latin America. His face appeared on all the TV commercials and billboards, and he gained pop-star status when he started dating a famous singer – an affair that filled the pages of the tabloids.

Lavolpe, a well-known enemy of the media, almost didn't take Ochoa as the team's third goalkeeper for Germany.

When Hugo Sanchez took over after the World Cup, the former Real Madrid striker decided to make Ochoa share the duties with Sanchez at the 2007 Copa America. And while the youngster shone in a 2-0 victory over Brazil, the veteran made two mistakes in the 3-0 semi-final defeat by Argentina.

It seemed that the debate was settled at last, but Sanchez was fired shortly afterwards and, with the arrival of Sven Goran Eriksson, the bench returned to haunt Ochoa.

> "The youngster was resilient, secure, agile and a natural team leader"

Like many managers before him, the Swede felt the keeper was too young for international responsibility and he too turned again to Sanchez. When Eriksson realized his mistake, it was too late. Sanchez, clearly at the twilight of his career, was the villain in the 2-0 defeat against the USA in the opener of the CONCACAF qualifiers and Eriksson's days were numbered.

After yet another change at the helm of the national team, Javier Aguirre decided to select an even more veteran goalkeeper in Oscar Perez, who was 36 at the time, instead of the 23 year-old boy. But this time it proved to be a temporary measure and the former Atletico Madrid coach wanted to see for himself if Ochoa was up to the task.

What Aguirre saw left him impressed. The America goalkeeper was not only resilient, secure and agile, but he also proved to be a natural leader, who was humble and well-liked by his team-mates. Aguirre decided to trust Ochoa at last, and the keeper repaid him by playing an instrumental role in Mexico's winning side at the CONCACAF Gold Cup, making impressive saves to ensure their ticket to South Africa.

Now, after having finally secured the national team's starting spot and being widely considered as one of the top goalkeepers in the continent, Ochoa is ready to impress the rest of the world.

"Memo" has been linked with clubs such as Manchester United, Paris Saint-Germain and Real Zaragoza, and in Mexico the general consensus is that he has the talent to be one of the stars of the World Cup.

After that, having run off his contract with America, the odds are that he won't return to the Mexican league for a long time.

Martin del Palacio Langer

In command...Ochoa has finally taken over as Mexico's first-choice keeper

POWER BROKERS

Dieter HOENESS

IT was a case of one brother out, another brother in. When Uli Hoeness stepped down after three decades of calling the shots as Bayern Munich's high-profile general manager, younger sibling Dieter took up a similar brief with the reigning Bundesliga champions, Wolfsburg.

Dieter, once a big, bustling old-school target man for Germany and Bayern, said on quitting his job as CEO at Hertha Berlin last year that he was out of the football business for good.

But clearly a life of golf and mountain biking was not enough for the 57-year-old – and there can be no doubting his credentials. Having scored goals galore for Stuttgart and Bayern, winning five Bundesliga titles with the latter and six full caps for his country – including a substitute appearance in the 1986 World Cup Final, which West Germany lost 3-2 to Argentina – he then had an excellent record running the football departments at Stuttgart (1990-95) and Hertha (1996-2009).

With Wolfsburg struggling to maintain the momentum of last term, his experience, ideas and no-nonsense style may be just what the doctor ordered.

Sylvain KASTENDEUCH

THOSE who know Sylvain Kastendeuch well are not surprised that the 46-year-old former libero, who was capped nine times by France between 1987 and 1989, is now co-president of the national players' union.

Modest to a fault, totally unselfish, hard working, intelligent and devoted to fair play, he was a model pro during his playing days and, despite his destructive vocation, he never received a red card in a 20-year top-flight career with Metz, Saint-Etienne and Toulouse.

On retiring from the game in 2001, he combined union work with responsibility for sport and youth facilities at Metz city council in eastern France, but in recent times he has devoted himself exclusively to defending the interests of Gallic players.

He was particularly to the fore in the autumn of 2008, using the threat of a top-flight strike to force club presidents to abandon their demands for the lion's share of voting rights on the French league management committee.

Grzegorz LATO

AT the height of his powers as a flying winger or predatory striker for Poland, Stal Mielec and Belgian outfit Lokeren in the 1970s and early 1980s, Grzegorz Lato's greatest asset was his extraordinary speed off the mark. And he needs to be just as nippy in his latest role as president of the Polish Football Association (PZPN).

Elected in October 2008 – comfortably beating PZPN general secretary Zdzislaw Kiecina and former international star Zbigniew Boniek – the 59-year-old has a number of substantial and intricate dossiers to work on: not least Poland's reputation as a match-fixing hot-spot and the country's joint-hosting of Euro 2012, which is their first-ever stab at a staging major tournament.

The top scorer at the 1974 World Cup finals with seven goals, Lato also has had to contend with the fallout from the national team's failure to qualify for this summer's World Cup finals. He came under much fire last autumn for the clumsy manner in which he announced the sacking of coach Leo Beenhakker, live on TV straight after a 3-0 loss to Slovenia. Mischievously, Beenhakker concluded that Lato must have been drinking.

SIX OF THE BEST

Nick Bidwell profiles half a dozen former players who became influential figures within the game

Daniel PASSARELLA

EXPECT the fur to fly following the election of Argentina's 1978 World Cup-winning captain Daniel Passarella as the president of his beloved River Plate in January.

In previous incarnations as an indomitable central defender and then as a drill-sergeant coach (of the national team and two spells in charge at River), neither diplomacy or the sensibility of others was a preoccupation. And as soon as the 56-year-old was installed in the boardroom he was up to his neck in controversy, pledging to join forces with arch-rivals Boca Juniors and four other top Argentinian clubs in the battle for a larger cut of TV income.

With River heavily in debt, one of his first moves was to order a top-to-bottom audit of the books.

"People are tired of politicians, businessmen and liars," declared *El Gran Capitan* [the great captain] on assuming control at El Monumental. "They voted for a breath of fresh air."

Legitimacy, however, may be a problem. He only scraped home in the presidential poll by six votes after a recount and there are many just waiting for him to slip up.

Dejan SAVICEVIC

SINCE calling time in 2001 on a quite exceptional playing career – few attacking midfielders in the world shone as brightly in the 1990s as the Yugoslavia, Red Star Belgrade and Milan ball artist – Dejan Savicevic has remained a central figure in Balkan football, first coaching Serbia & Montenegro (2001-03), then becoming the first president of the Montenegrin FA, a post he has held since 2004. However, it has not been an easy task for the 43-year-old.

The association's transition from regional to national body, following full independence for Montenegro in 2006, ensured a huge amount of groundwork. And just to further complicate matters, messy distractions proved commonplace: especially his bitter feud with FA vice-president Rajo Bozovic and an ongoing dispute with Montenegrin newspaper *Dan*, whose virulent criticism of him led to their reporters being banned from national team matches.

Always one to wear his heart on his sleeve and fight his corner with colourful language, Savicevic was returned to serve another four-year term last summer.

Angel Maria VILLAR

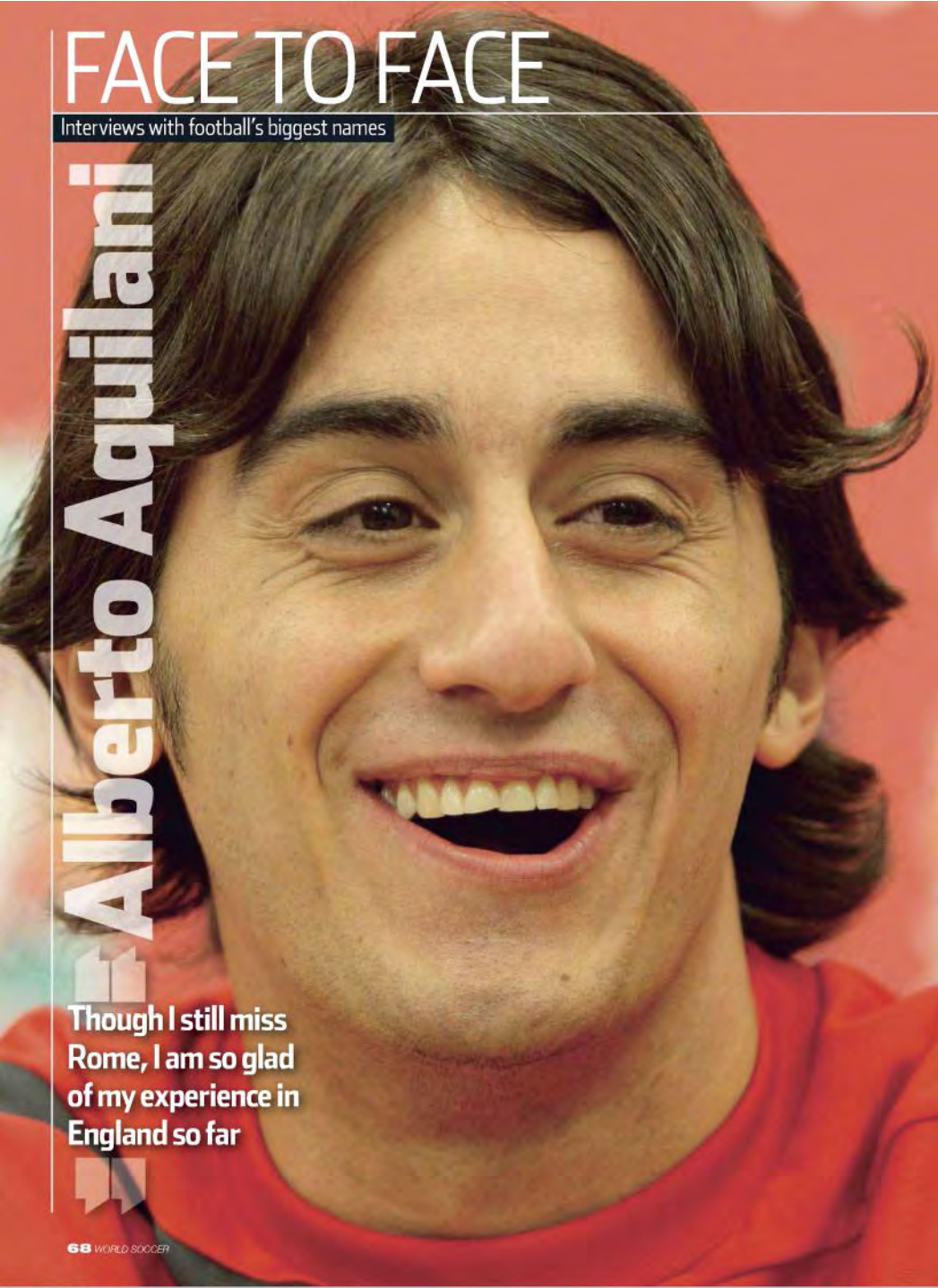
ON Sunday, March 24, 1974, Athletic Bilbao defensive midfielder Angel Maria Villar connected with a left hook to the jaw of Barcelona's Dutch superstar Johan Cruyff and walked off the pitch before the referee could issue the inevitable red card. But who in attendance that day could have imagined that this would-be pugilist would go on to be a lawyer, one of the founders of the Spanish players' association and a long-serving supremo of the Spanish game?

Capped on 22 occasions by Spain, he started out as a football administrator in the Basque Country, then served on the national federation's executive committee prior to taking over the presidency from Jose Luis Roca in 1988. Coming up for 22 years later, he is still there, re-elected no fewer than five times.

His longevity and loyalty should not astound. Now 60, he was the same as a player, spending his entire career (11 seasons and 410 league games) at Athletic. A UEFA vice-president since 2000, he has held a similar brief at FIFA for the past eight years, notably heading the Referees Committee.

The wheel really has turned full circle.

Alberto Aquilani



Though I still miss Rome, I am so glad of my experience in England so far

Alberto Aquilani

Despite a tough start to his career in the Premier League, the former Roma star is happy with life at Liverpool

I wouldn't change a thing

You were born and raised in Rome, and then spent 10 years with Roma. How hard was it to leave your home-town club and sign for Liverpool?
It was – and it is – very difficult for a Roman, a *romanista*, such as me, to leave the city and say goodbye to Roma. Rome is in my heart and it will be there forever. I go back home whenever I can. I grew up there, it is where all my friends and my family live, and where my roots are. But it was a conscious decision on my part to sign for Liverpool and, though I still miss Rome, I am so glad of my experience in England so far. I would not change anything – except the results the team have experienced on the field and the long months I endured on the sidelines as I worked to regain my fitness.

Were you worried about moving to England?
To be truthful, before I arrived I had a terrible fear of the English press because everyone I spoke to warned me they could be very dangerous. But I have experienced no problems with them yet, so perhaps it was just an exaggeration.

You are over 6ft tall, yet your nickname is "The Little Prince". Can you explain this?
The name has nothing to do with my height. As a child, my football idol was Giuseppe Giannini, a superstar no10 and captain of Roma. I had his poster on my bedroom wall and loved his style of play. He was so smart and skillful; beautiful to watch and brilliant with a dead ball. He never gave away possession. They called him *Il Principe* [the prince] and when I played at the Roma academy, people said I resembled him and so began the story of *Il Piccolo Principe* or *Principino* [the little prince].

How did you feel when you saw Liverpool fans unfurling banners at Anfield, proclaiming "*Il Principino* – A Hero has Arrived"?
It filled me with incredible pride. I was already accustomed to the Roma supporters saluting me with their own songs and banners, but for the Liverpool fans to do the same, even though I had not proved myself in the Premier League, was amazing. It is now my job to repay their support and love. *Giallorossi* fans are extraordinary and unique, the best in Italy for sure. There are no more passionate fans in the country. But from what I have seen in England, Liverpool supporters come from the same mould. They have a great reputation in the world of football and I now know exactly why.

An ankle injury decimated the start of your Anfield career. How frustrating was it not being able to figure at the start of the season?
It was one of the hardest, darkest times of my career. Injury is a nightmare for any player, but to be unable to play just after I had joined a new club was terrible. The time seemed to go so slowly as I tried to get fit. Every match I was forced to miss was agony. But I am now trying not to dwell on what has happened and focus purely on the future. I am finally fit now and desperate to show the club, my team-mates and the fans exactly what I can do.

Critics have called you injury prone. How do you react to such allegations?
I cannot agree with these people at all. Injury is a part of life for all footballers, but I do not believe I have a greater predisposition to injury than anyone else. The problems I have had have been caused by desire to do well for Roma last season and now Liverpool – and perhaps returning too soon and hurting myself again. Both times the team needed me and I was desperate to make a contribution. But I would do the same again if I felt I could help achieve a good result.

Both Arsenal and Chelsea reportedly tried to sign you at the age of 16. Why did you reject their advances?
It is true, there was talk of interest from both clubs, but I am not sure how serious the rumours were. However, at that time my only focus was to sign a professional contract with Roma and I did not want to abandon that dream. Perhaps it was my destiny to come to England to play for Liverpool and not Chelsea or Arsenal.

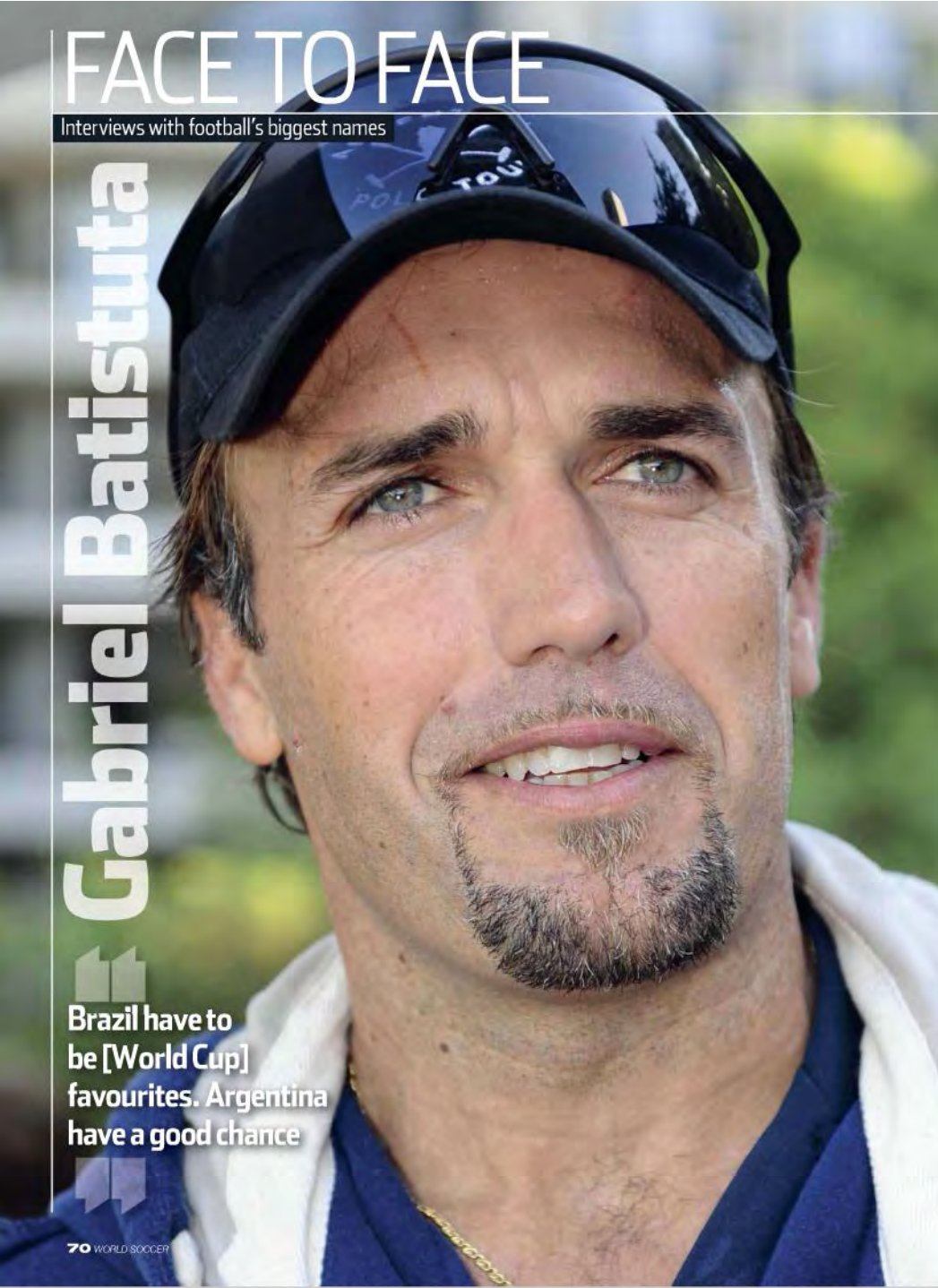
The media have described you as the player signed to replace Xabi Alonso. Does that increase the pressure on you to succeed at Anfield?
Not at all. I am Aquilani not Alonso. I am a different person and have a different style of play. Of course I know what an influential player he was for Liverpool, but I do not think of following in his footsteps, only of making my own path. It is obvious to me and anyone who knows anything about the game that we are two different kinds of player and I hope soon I will show the Liverpool fans what I can achieve here.

The World Cup is looming on the horizon. How would you assess your chances of making the Italy squad for South Africa?
It is obvious that I must play regular games for Liverpool between now and the end of the season if I am to have a chance of making the 23. After that, we shall see. The good news is the Premier League is so strong, perhaps the most important in the world, so if I can do well here it will prove my form is good. It is the dream of every player to perform at the World Cup and I am no different. But nothing will happen for me unless I begin to shine for Liverpool and, for now, that is my only focus. The club has been very patient with me and I feel that I owe them for that.

Interview by Christian Giordano

Long wait...Injuries meant a belated start at Anfield

Gabriel Batistuta



Brazil have to be [World Cup] favourites. Argentina have a good chance

Gabriel Batistuta

The former Argentina striker on why there is life after football

Batigol's new target

We haven't seen you in Europe for a while, Gabriel...
I don't call journalists when I come to Europe! In Italy they complain that I do not visit, but I have a house in Florence which I visit three or four times a year. I just don't call in advance!

What have you done since you stopped playing?
Resting. I spent two years in Australia, where I just rested. Then I went back to Argentina, to the place where I was born, Santa Fe. I play a lot of golf and I've started to play polo.

So you keep horses for the polo?
Yes, I keep them on the farm which I own with my father. We also breed cattle.

So life is good away from football?
I can't complain.

Do you watch much football?
I watch more matches now than when I was playing. I go to the stadium when I can, but I also watch a lot of games on TV. At this moment in my life I'm still resting from the 20-year pressure that I went through.

Do you plan to go back to football at some point?
I've got my coaching diploma but my plan, if I go back to football, would be as a team manager, not as the coach.

Is that because coaching is too stressful?
All over the world it is the same. Unfortunately the profession of coaching is a very short-lived one, regardless of whether you win or not. And I'm not very passionate about that!

Do you have a favourite for the World Cup, other than Argentina?
Brazil have to be favourites. Spain have been playing well. Argentina have a good chance because they have plenty of good players and a coach who has won a lot of times and can transmit his winning mentality to the players.

Diego Maradona was criticised for changing the team a lot in the qualifiers. Could the World Cup be different, because he cannot alter his squad of 23?
The difference will be that he can work with the same players for a month before, and it all depends on how the players are feeling when they arrive at the World Cup.

You played with Maradona in 1994. Was he the most forceful personality in the squad?
No, we all had strong personalities. We all wanted the best for the team. So we let people talk in the dressing room and made sure we were all heard. Maradona was no exception.

Was 1998, when you reached the quarter-finals, a better tournament for you?
None of the three World Cups I played in were good for me because we did not win. For us Argentinians it was the same going back after three games or five games.

Why did you end your career in Qatar? You could have moved anywhere.
I was at the end of my professional career. I wanted another experience, I wanted to learn about another culture. If I went to Spain or England it would have been something very similar to what I had already experienced.

What was different about the lifestyle. Was anything difficult?
No, I felt at ease from the start. I went with my wife and my children. We found schools of a high standard. The hospitals were a high level. My fourth son was born there and I wanted him to be born there. That was a factor in my staying for two years.

And now you're involved with Qatar's 2022 World Cup bid.
My two years living there were a wonderful experience for me and my family. I stopped playing because I had problems with my ankles, but the time I spent there was always in the back of my mind. It was a pleasure to be contacted by Qatar because it meant I must have left a positive impression there.

A World Cup in Qatar would be a very different tournament. We tend to think of World Cup Finals in famous footballing cities like Buenos Aires or Rome.
FIFA's motto is football for everyone. We've never had a World Cup in the middle east. In recent years, the Arab world has opened up. We have a chance for FIFA to give the Arab world this opportunity.

How are the playing conditions? People are concerned about the temperatures.
I played there for two years. It was hot but you can play perfectly well. Now they are working on a cooling system at the Al Sadd stadium where the technology enables the temperature inside the stadium to be 20 degrees when it is 30 or 40 outside.

What did you think of the Thierry Henry handball?
When you are on the pitch, things happen and you don't know what the reaction will be. Maybe he didn't know what he did.

So Henry's action was instinctive?
Certainly. But FIFA should accept the help of technology. I don't see why football should not open its doors to new technology.

Were there any times in your career when TV replays would have helped?
Certainly. There's suspicion about referees. People think how can the referee not see things that are seen on TV? Replays would help to eliminate any suspicion.

Lionel Messi played for your old team, Newell's Old Boys, but went to Europe as a very young teenager. You went to Italy at a much older age. Do players go to Europe too early nowadays?
Yes. When I started playing, I was 18 years old. When Messi was 18 he had won trophies with Barcelona. Those are the two extremes. I started late, he started very young. The truth is somewhere in the middle.

There's been a lot of pressure on Messi from a very early age. You were able to grow up more slowly.
South American players grow up quickly, from a sports point of view, but mentally they're not well prepared. It's difficult to see a Spanish, Italian or English player in the top division when he's 18. In Argentina, when you're 18, you've already played in one or two championships. The clubs need to sell, so they sell a 20-year-old player because another one is right behind.

Interview by Gavin Hamilton

Happy times...Batistuta (left) celebrating with Maradona

COLOMBIA

Jackson MARTINEZ

Hot shot too late to end World Cup misery

YET AGAIN, a lack of goals was the main reason Colombia missed out on the World Cup finals for a third consecutive time. The team were sixth in South American qualifying, having scored just 14 times in their 18 games, but that total could have been so much higher if Jackson Martinez had emerged earlier.

The 23-year-old striker only featured in the last four rounds: off the bench for the first pair and in the starting line-up for the other two. But goals against Ecuador, Uruguay and Chile still made him the team's top scorer in the campaign with what was merely an extension of the form he had been showing on a weekly basis for Independiente Medellin in the second half of 2009.

Originally from Quibdo in west Colombia, he made the short trip to Medellin as a youngster and was given his first-team debut in 2004 – the beneficiary of a rule obliging the selection of at least one under-20 player. Establishing himself was not easy though, and he was a frequent target for terrace impatience at the Atanasio Girardot stadium – until the goals began to flow in the second half of 2008.

After a superb hat-trick against Penarol of Uruguay in the qualifying round of the Libertadores Cup, his progress was interrupted by injury early in 2009. But he was fit by the start of the closing championship and ready to make up for lost time.

Sleek, quick and uncomplicated, he kept scoring all the way to the Final, where he got the only goal of the opening game against Atletico Huila. The return was looking complicated until he found the net again, helping Medellin win 3-2 on aggregate and claim their fifth title. His 18 goals set a new record for the competition since the short-tournament format was introduced.

With his club desperate to cash in, he signed a pre-contract with South Korean club Ulsan Hyundai Horang-i in November. But by the end of the following month his stock was higher. There were other options and it was clear that the player was not keen on a move to the Far East.

Following interest from Racing in Argentina, River Plate – who, a decade earlier, had been such an excellent finishing school for Colombia striker Juan Pablo Angel – tried to sort out a deal, but their huge financial problems meant it took too long to work out the mechanics of the move.

"I would have loved to play in Argentina for a club as big as River," says Martinez. "But the offer came when everything was sorted out with Jaguares."

And so he moved to Mexico, joining Jaguares de Chiapas – who were already signing a Medellin team-mate, attacking midfielder Luis Fernando Mosquera, and had the patience to unravel the complexities of his pre-contract situation with the Koreans.

Mexican football worked well in the career development of Hugo Rodallega; now Colombia hope it will aid the progress of Jackson Martinez and help him blast his country back to the World Cup in Brazil in 2014.

Tim Vickery

FACT FILE

Club Jaguares de Chiapas (Mex)
Country Colombia
Born October 3, 1986, in Quibdo
Previous club Independiente Medellin
International debut September 2009 v Ecuador
International caps 5 (3 goals)
Honours Colombian closing champion 2009

ALAN KARDEC

Benfica's new acquisition turns heads

FOR reasons of history and language, the Portuguese league is to Brazilian footballers what New York's Ellis Island used to be for would-be immigrants to the United States – and the latest to make the transatlantic trek from Rio to Lisbon is promising young striker Alan Kardec, who was recently acquired by Benfica from Vasco da Gama.

Benfica's decision to spend £2.18million on him had its roots in the 21-year-old's major contribution to Brazil's silver medal at the 2009 Under-20 World Cup in Egypt, a tournament in which he stood out from the herd thanks to his aerial ability and sharpness in the box. Brazil's top scorer in those finals with four goals – including the winner that he memorably lashed home from an acute angle in the semi-final against Costa Rica – the tall, lean youngster looked on this evidence to be a golden talent.

However, as Benfica must be aware, this is not a signing without its risks. Since exploding onto the Brazilian scene with a clutch of headed goals for Vasco da Gama in 2007, his form at club level has proved patchy; so much so that he lost his first-team spot last year and was loaned out to Internacional of Porto Alegre, where he fared no better. Benfica desperately need the Alan Kardec of the *Selecao* to show up.

A product of the Vasco youth system and a fan of Brazilian goalscoring legend Romario, he is named (incorrectly) after Allan Kardec, a 19th-century French writer on the spirit world, whose teachings were espoused by Kardec's grandparents. Will the spirits help him move on to another level at Benfica?

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Full name Alan Kardec de Souza Pereira Junior
Club Benfica (Por)
Country Brazil
Born January 12, 1989, in Barra Mansa
Previous clubs Vasco da Gama, Internacional (on loan)

Maxime LESTIENNE

Making the most of Mouscron's demise

WHEN Belgian top-flight side Mouscron went into receivership at the end of last year – thus making their entire squad free agents – their teenage winger could sleep sound in the knowledge that he would have no difficulty finding alternative employment.

Premier League outfits Arsenal, Manchester United and Everton, a number of Belgian sides (Anderlecht, Standard Liege and Gent), plus Dutch heavyweights PSV Eindhoven – who gave the job of swinging the deal to their youth team coach: the former Belgium international striker Luc Nilis – were all jostling to sign the 17-year-old.

However, on sifting through his many options, the baby-faced Lestienne finally plumped for Flemish flag-bearers Club Brugge, who besides pushing for their first Belgian title in five seasons, also happen to be the club he supports. "More than anything else, I wanted to stay in Belgium," says Lestienne, who since making his full debut for Mouscron before Christmas 2009 has had a ball dribbling in and around defenders twice his size.

However, he is going to be seen rather than heard at his new club. In a bid to prevent his over-exposure, Club Brugge intend to keep him out of the media spotlight, which, perhaps, is just as well. The French-speaking Lestienne only has a limited knowledge of Flemish and must take a crash course to improve.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club Club Brugge
Country Belgium
Born June 17, 1992, in Korkrijk
Previous club Mouscron

SPAIN

Sergio CANALES

Teenager's three steps to stardom

METEORIC IS a description that hardly does the Racing Santander teenager justice. After just three starts he was all over the papers, all over the television and, not surprisingly, there was quite a queue forming outside his front door.

Barcelona, Valencia and Sevilla were interested, as were Manchester City and Chelsea; even Manchester United boss Alex Ferguson flew to Spain to have a look.

In the end, Real Madrid appear to have trumped them all and the man of the moment – more like the boy of the moment – will go to the Santiago Bernabeu, though he will be loaned back to Racing to continue his development for the next year at least.

Canales may have only started three games in his entire professional career and may still be at school, but he already looks to be Madrid's next superstar.

Yet to complete a full 90 minutes, he was being feted as the best player in Spain and this term's must-have accessory.

Having already appeared as a sub – and had a coolly taken, perfectly good goal disallowed – against Real Madrid at the Bernabeu, he made his starting debut against Espanyol.

He scored twice in a 4-0 win, playing for a side that was languishing near the relegation zone.

His second start was against Tenerife and Racing won again, 2-0.

Next up was Sevilla away – and he scored another two: the first a wonderful scooped shot over the goalkeeper, Andres Palop, the second a cool step past him, a pause to send the retreating defender sliding by and a simple, easy finish. "Madre mia!" screamed the radio commentator. "What little fear! What little nerves! What coolness! This lad's confidence is just insulting!"

As one columnist put it: "He plays as if he was playing in the hallway of his house. His heart rate never went over 40 beats a minute."

Those goals – in their smoothness, their technical accomplishment, the vision and the lack of fear – were the perfect embodiment of Canales. In three starts he had won three matches and scored four times. And he had looked special each time: clever, precise, utterly in control, unflustered.

Everyone was going mad and, suddenly alerted by the fact that his contract was up at the end of the season, he was a hot property.

Yet Canales is no secret. He had been a European Under-17 champion with Spain and he was player of the tournament when Spain won the Atlantic Cup – a kind of unofficial European Under-18 Championship. In Santander, they'd known he was special for years, and other clubs had also done their homework: Sevilla made an offer long before he scored against them, while Barcelona had shown him round Camp Nou. After he scored against Sevilla, everyone else acted too.

But by then, Racing's great young hope had already agreed to become Madrid's next galactico.

Sid Lowe

FACT FILE

Club Racing Santander
Country Spain
Born February 16, 1991, in Santander
Honours European Under-17 Championship

FIVE TO FOLLOW

Nick Bidwell profiles five players to watch in the final stages of the Europa League

Club/Country Anderlecht/Belgium
Born April 13, 1987
Position Midfielder

Jonathan LEGEAR

ANDERLECHT have made it a house speciality to use rumbustious players with blond spiky hair on the right side of midfield: first was Sweden's Christian Wilhelmsson, and now Legear, who has grafted consistency onto his flair and speed this season. He caused a stir by quitting Standard Liege for rivals Anderlecht and sometimes seems hell-bent on throwing it all away, having been involved in car crashes and a heated dispute with a neighbour.

Club/Country Benfica (Por)/Brazil
Born April 22, 1987
Position Defender

DAVID LUIZ

TOUGH, resourceful and technically sound Brazil Under-20 centre-back who Milan attacking star Alexandre Pato cites as one of most talented young players in the world today. Also proficient at left-back, he started out with leading Bahia state side Vitoria, before heading for Benfica in January 2007 – on loan for the first six months, then the subject of a five-year contract. Benfica rate him so highly that they will only consider letting him go if a buyer stumps up £20million.

Club/Country Werder Bremen/Germany
Born March 13, 1988
Position Midfielder

Marko MARIN

WHETHER used as a winger, attacking midfielder or second striker, the featherweight dribbling maestro can usually be guaranteed to trick his way past defensive checkpoints. As long as he has the freedom to operate on instinct – which his club coach Thomas Schaaf tends to allow – Marin could be the trump card in Europe. Of Bosnian-Serb descent, he has been capped seven times by Germany.

Club/Country Athletic Bilbao/Spain
Born February 26, 1985
Position Forward

Fernando LLORENTE

ATHLETIC have long favoured the British-style power game – and they have the ideal exponent of that tactic in Llorente, who – apart from his remarkable ability in the air – knows how to throw his weight around (which was not always the case), on top of which he is no slouch with the ball at his feet either. His team-mates will constantly look for the head of the Spain international as a matter of course and rightly so as he has been unstoppable in Europe this term.

Club/Country Copenhagen (Den)/Senegal
Born February 21, 1980
Position Forward

Dame N'DOYE

THE aerial power, strong running and marksmanship of the Senegalese front man have proved to be a key element in his side's passage to the last-32 of the Europa League. He is also able to turn his hand to a creative midfield brief if required. Something of a wanderer, he left his homeland and had spells in Qatar, Portugal and Greece before moving to Denmark and joining Copenhagen from OFI Crete last year for what is looking like a bargain £1.8million.

SAO PAULO The clubs, the history, what to see, how to get there

Rich history

Peterjon Cresswell visits Brazil's wealthiest city and looks at three of the nation's greatest clubs

Loyal...Corinthians enjoy the lion's share of support in the city of Sao Paulo

HOME TO THREE clubs who have carved up the lion's share of the national championship, the city of Sao Paulo can rightly regard itself as Brazil's football capital. However, the success of Corinthians, Palmeiras and Sao Paulo can all be traced back to the English-public-school educated Charles Miller.

The son of a Scottish railway engineer and a Brazilian mother of English descent, Miller was born in Sao Paulo and fell in love with football during his schooldays in Southampton, during which time he played for leading amateur side Corinthians. On his return to Brazil's industrial and financial hub in 1894, he brought with him a pair of boots and a Football Association rule book.

Miller's family were coffee merchants, and immigrants provided most of the labour for Sao Paulo's boom industry and the services that made it run. Never having lost his enthusiasm for the game, within a year Miller had organised a match involving British workers at the Sao Paulo Railway Company, the English and Brazilian Bank, and the Gas Company – and as a result the city's foreign communities began to form their own clubs.

Corinthians honoured

The Portuguese founded the Germania and Lusitano clubs, while the British started Mackenzie Wanderers. The English amateur side Corinthians, who had recently toured Brazil, were honoured in name when railway workers from the Spanish community formed Sport Club Corinthians Paulista. Not to be outdone, a group of Italians set up Palestra Italia, and by the time Atletico Paulistano came into being in 1900 there were 60 or so different clubs playing matches.

Sao Paulo Athletic won the first Campeonato Paulista (the Sao Paulo state championship) in 1902, but by 1920 it was Corinthians who dominated the tournament, establishing an intense rivalry with Palestra Italia.

When professionalism began creeping into the game, a group of players from Club Atletico Paulistano formed a new team, Sao Paulo FC, in 1930. The club reinvented itself again five years later after merging with a sailing club, while Brazil's entry into the second world war forced Palestra Italia to change their name to Palmeiras.

With the end of

Wealth...Sao Paulo striker Dagoberto

THE STADIUMS

1 MORUMBI STADIUM
Officially known as the Estadio Cicero Pompeu de Toledo (after the club president who laid the stadium's first stone but didn't live to see it finished), Sao Paulo's home took eight years to complete and was inaugurated against Sporting Lisbon in 1960. It once had 120,000 seats, but safety conditions now restrict capacity to 67,000.

2 PACAEMBU STADIUM
The Estadio Municipal Paulo Machado de Carvalho is the 40,000-capacity home of Corinthians, but there is talk of a new stadium.

3 PARQUE ANTARTICA
Palmeiras' Estadio Palestra Italia is an intimate 28,000-capacity affair which is also the subject of rebuild rumours. Until then, Palmeiras, like Corinthians, play their big games at the Morumbi.

Best...Sao Paulo's Muller with the Intercontinental Cup

In the war came a building boom in Brazil that saw new stadia springing up ready for the country's hosting of the 1950 World Cup. And as Sao Paulo's population doubled in size, so the various teams' community followings began to become blurred with each new generation. Two concepts, however, have always remained constant: the rivalry between Corinthians and Palmeiras, and Sao Paulo's exclusive tag as the team of the rich and prosperous.

Having won regular state titles in the 1940s, thanks to the acquisition of stars such as Leonidas and Antonio Sastre, moneyed Sao Paulo diverted funds to the building of the Morumbi stadium. But it wasn't until the 1970s, when their side included World Cup heroes Gerson and Pedro Rocha, that regular silverware returned.

Great names like Careca and Falcao followed a decade later, but it was another top international figure, coach Tele Santana, who was behind the club's greatest era.

Having won the national title in 1991, Santana's side of Rai and Muller went on to overcome Newell's Old Boys and win the 1992 Libertadores Cup. That same year they beat Johan Cruyff's Barcelona "Dream Team" to collect the Intercontinental Cup, repeating the feat against Milan in 1993. Santana's departure in 1996 on health grounds left a void and the club went through 14 managers in the next 10 years.

High-scoring goalkeeper Rogerio Ceni was the star when Sao Paulo next won the Libertadores, and the Club World Cup, in 2005 and they went on to win three consecutive national titles between 2006 and 2008.

Although not as successful as Sao Paulo, no one can match Corinthians for local support. Known as "The Academy of Football", a side containing 1970 World Cup hero Rivelino won many plaudits but very little silverware as they played out some epic derbies with Palmeiras.

The state title decider in 1974 between Corinthians and reigning national champions Palmeiras was played in front of a six-figure crowd at the Morumbi – and ended with

yet another win for the Greens.

Rivelino eventually left for Fluminense, but he returned in 1977 to help "the Academy" win their first state title for 23 years. This was followed by a vintage era in which liberal-thinking stars such as Socrates and Wladimir and wore slogans to urge fans to vote against Brazil's military rulers.

The club's relegation in 2006 was a sad day for all, but they have since bounced back and the recent arrival of veterans Ronaldo and Roberto Carlos should pep things up for the club's centenary year as they go all out for a first-ever Libertadores title.

Lean spells

Palmeiras have also had their lean spells, though things picked up in 1993 when a team containing Roberto Carlos, Edmundo and Rivaldo won two Brazilian titles and the Libertadores Cup followed in 1999 under Luiz Felipe Scolari.

A Libertadores quarter-final that year against Corinthians was decided on a shoot-out in which Greens' keeper Marcos saved two penalties. Then, a year later, in a semi-final between the two teams in the same competition, he again helped his side triumph on penalties – and earned himself the tag "Saint". ●

Local rivalry...Cleiton Xavier of Palmeiras (right) battles it out with Corinthians' Cristian

SAO PAULO SURVIVAL GUIDE

South America's commercial capital

● TRANSPORT

Guarulhos International Airport, also known as Cumbica, is 15 miles from town and buses run to the city centre. Public transport consists of a metro and city buses, and the electronic Bilhete Unico card, available at metro stations, allows use of both.

● INFORMATION & HOTELS

The main tourist office (www.cityofsaopaulo.com) is at Avenida Sao Joao 473. The luxurious Grand Hyatt (Avenida das Nacoes Unidas 13.301, +55 11 2838 1234, www.saopaulo.grand.hyatt.com, £200) is the best hotel in town. For mid-priced comfort try Tryp Jesuino Arruda (Rua Jesuino Arruda 806, +55 11 3704 4400, www.solmelia.com, £85), while Residenza Mantovani (Rua Desembargador Eliseu Guilherme 269, +55 11 3889 8624, www.residenzamantovani.com.br, £40) is a popular budget guest house.

● EATING & DRINKING

Japanese restaurants reflect the largest such community outside Japan, while DOM (Rua Barao de Capanema 549, +55 11 3088 0761, www.domrestaurante.com.br) offers regional favourites. Choperias are pubs serving ice-cold beers and filling fare, and football-friendly bars include O'Malley's (Alameda Itu 1529, www.omalleysbar.net). Real aficionados should head to the Sao Cristovao (Rua Aspicuelta 533), which is a bar-cum-museum to the little club of that name.

● DAYTIME ENTERTAINMENT

Historic churches rub shoulders with cool, contemporary architecture in downtown Sa Paulo, while the Parque do Ibirapuera is a must.

● MATCH DAY

Sao Paulo's Morumbi (Praca Roberto Gomes Pedrosa 1) can be reached by bus 765A-10. As with all the city's clubs, tickets can be bought online at www.futebolclub.com with cash at the ground. Corinthians' Estadio do Pacaembu (Praca Charles Miller) is served by bus 408A-10 and has a museum (www.museudofutebol.org.br), which houses Pele's shirt from the 1970 World Cup. Palmeiras' Parque Antartica is on Rua Turiassa, between the Palmeiras/Barra Funda local station and the Pacaembu stadium.

FORTHCOMING FIXTURES

● Morumbi Stadium
Mar 14 Sao Paulo v Rio Branco
Mar 18 Sao Paulo v Nacional
Mar 21 Sao Paulo v Mogi Mirim

● Pacaembu Stadium
Mar 3 Corinthians v Botafogo
Mar 13 Corinthians v Santo Andre
Mar 24 Corinthians v Paulista
Mar 28 Corinthians v Sao Paulo

● Parque Antartica
Mar 3 Palmeiras v Santo Andre
Mar 7 Palmeiras v Sertaozinho
Mar 20 Palmeiras v Ponte Preta

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SPEED

PRO-DIRECT ★★★★★★ ELITE LEVEL

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Honours even

Marseille's Brazilian striker Brandao (top) looks to have got the better of defender Benoit Tremoulinas as the visitors brought Ligue 1 leaders Bordeaux down to earth with a draw at Stade Chaban Delmas. More information, page 101.

Veteran...Song

CAMEROON

Matip goes awol

Schalke's Joel Matip was left out of Paul Le Guen's African Nations Cup squad after he failed to turn up for a friendly before the tournament began.

EGYPT

Tenth best in the world

The Pharaohs' victory in the African Nations Cup saw them reach an all-time national high in the FIFA world rankings, climbing 14 places to 10th – the second-highest ranking of any African team since the introduction of the rankings.

Egypt's position has been bettered only by Nigeria, who reached fifth place in the FIFA rankings in April 1994.

MALI

Kanoute quits

Sevilla striker Frederic Kanoute announced his retirement from international football after the African Nations Cup. The 32-year-old, who was born in France and capped by the French at Under-21 level, scored 23 goals in 38 games for Mali.

MOZAMBIQUE

Dario Khan's double

Dario Khan found the net twice as often as any of his countrymen during the African Nations Cup. Unfortunately

8 African Nations Cup finals that 33-year-old Rigobert Song of Cameroon has played in

RESULTS

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP FINALS

In Angola

Group A

Jan 10 - Luanda
Angola 4 (Flavio 37, 42, Gilberto pen 66, Manucho pen 74)
Mali 4 (Keita 79, 90+3, Kanoute 88, Kotabare 90+4)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 50,000. **Ref:** Abd El Fatah (Egy)
Angola: Carlos - Rui Marques, Kali, Stelvio, Mabina, Zuela, Kara, Dede (Djalma 25), Gilberto (Enoque 81), Manucho, Flavio (Love 62).
Mali: Sidibe - Berthe, Soumare, Diawadione, Tamboura, Diarra, Bagayoko (Kotabare 75), M Traore, B Traore (Fane 57), M Maiga (Keita 35), Kanoute.

Jan 11 - Luanda
Malawi 3 (Mwafulirwa 17, Kafoteka 35, Banda 48)
Algeria 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 1,500. **Ref:** Diatta (Sen)
Malawi: Sanudi - Kafoteka, Mponda, Sangala, Chavula, Madabwa (Zakazaka 77), Mwakasungula, Kamwendo, Banda (Ng'ambi 59), Mwafulirwa (C Msowoya 83), Kanyenda.
Algeria: Chaouchi - Bougherra, Halliche, Zaoui, Belhadj, Matmour (Bezzaz 62), Yebda, Saifi (Ziaya 62), Mansouri, Zsmi, Ghezzal (Bouazza 79).

Jan 14 - Luanda
Mali 0
Algeria 1 (Halliche 42)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 4,000. **Ref:** Sagongna (Nga)
Mali: Diakite - Berthe, Soumare, A Maiga, Tamboura, M Sissoko (Fane 66), Diarra, Keita, M Maiga, N'Diaye (Kanoute 61), Yatabare (Diallo 59).
Algeria: Chaouchi - Lalaoui, Bougherra, Halliche, Belhadj, Yebda, Mansouri, Ziani, Matmour (Ziaya 90), Ghezzal (Saifi 80), Bezzaz (Bouazza 70).

Jan 14 - Luanda
Angola 2 (Flavio 46, Manucho 53)
Malawi 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 48,500. **Ref:** Doue (IvC)
Angola: Carlos - Rui Marques, Kali, Zuela, Mabina, Stelvio, Kara, Djalma (David 73), Gilberto (Jamiama 35), Flavio (Marbiernas 62), Manucho.
Malawi: Sanudi - Kafoteka, Sangala, Mponda, Chavula, Mwakasungula, Madabwa (Zakazaka 55), Banda, Kamwendo (Ng'ambi 75), Kanyenda, Y Mvirenda (C Msowoya 46).

Jan 18 - Luanda
Angola 0
Algeria 0
Att: 25,000. **Ref:** Damon (SAf)
Angola: Carlos - Rui Marques, Kali, Zuela (Dias Caires 53), Za Kalanga (Akin 65), Jamiama, Djalma, Kara, Gilberto, Mabina, Manucho (Johnson 90).
Algeria: Chaouchi - Lalaoui, Bougherra, Halliche, Belhadj, Yebda, Mansouri, Ziani, Matmour (Abdour 89), Ghezzal, Bouazza (Meghni 67).

Jan 18 - Cabinda
Mali 3 (Kanoute 1, Keita 5, Bagayoko 85)
Malawi 1 (Mwafulirwa 55)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Seechurn (Mts)
Mali: Sidibe - Berthe, Diawadione, A Maiga (Sow 51), Tamboura, M Sissoko, Fane, Keita, M Traore (Diallo 60), Bagayoko, Kanoute (M Maiga 81).
Malawi: Sanudi - Kafoteka (C Msowoya 53), Mponda, Sangala, Chavula, Madabwa (Nyondo 46), Mwakasungula, Kamwendo, Banda, Mwafulirwa, Kanyenda (Ng'ambi 71).

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP - GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Angola	3	1	2	0	6	4	5
Algeria	3	1	1	1	3	4	4
Mali	3	1	1	1	7	6	4
Malawi	3	1	0	2	4	5	3

Group B

Jan 11 - Cabinda
Ivory Coast 0
Burkina Faso 0
Att: 13,000. **Ref:** Bernaoui (Tun)
Ivory Coast: Barry - Eboue, K Toure, Bamba, Tiene, Zokora, Y Toure, Tiote (Dindane 81), B Kone (Keita 69), Drogba, Gervinho (Kalou 73).
Burkina Faso: Diakite - Koulibaly (Ouanou 46), Tall, Panandetiguiri, B Kone, Kabore, Rouamba, Pitroipa, Kere, Bagano (Y Kone 81), Yameogo (Bamogo 62).

Jan 15 - Cabinda
Ivory Coast 3 (Gervinho 22, Tiene 67, Drogba 90)
Ghana 1 (Gyan pen 90+2)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 23,000. **Ref:** Damon (SAf)
Ivory Coast: Barry - Eboue, K Toure, Bamba, Tiene, Tiote, Y Toure (Fae 70), Zokora, Kalou (Keita 83), Drogba, Gervinho (Demel 59). *Sent off: Eboue 55min.*
Ghana: Kingson - Inkoom, Vorsah, Addo, R Ayew, A Ayew (Gyan 46), Agyemang-Badu, Narry (Essien 46), Asamoah, Opoku (Afful 76), Amoah.

Jan 19 - Luanda
Burkina Faso 0
Ghana 1 (A Ayew 30)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 1,500. **Ref:** Mallet (Sey)
Burkina Faso: Diakite - Panandetiguiri, B Kone, Tall, Koulibaly (Koffi 64), Bamogo (Bagano 72), Kere, Rouamba, Kabore (Bulima 59), Pitroipa, Y Kone. *Sent off: Tall 88min.*
Ghana: Kingson - Inkoom, Vorsah, Addy, Sarpei, Draman (Opoku 90), Agyemang-Badu, Asamoah, A Ayew, Gyan (R Ayew 87), Amoah (Adiyiah 78).

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP - GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Ghana	2	1	0	1	2	3	3
Burkina Faso	2	0	1	1	0	1	1

Togo withdrew following a gun attack on their team bus, which resulted in the death of an assistant coach, a team spokesman and the bus driver.

Group C

Jan 12 - Benguela
Egypt 3 (Mohsen 34, Hassan 54, Gedo 85)
Nigeria 1 (Obasi 13)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 16,000. **Ref:** Seechurn (Mts)
Egypt: El Hadary - Fathy, Gomaa, Said, Fathalla, Moawad, Abd Rabo (Gedo 71), Ghaly (Al Muhammadi 53), Hassan, Zidan (Abdel Shafy 63), Metwab.
Nigeria: Enyeama - Mohammed, Yobo, Nwanwi, Taiwo, Yussuf, Mikel (Kanu 77), Etuhu, Obasi, Yakubu, Uche (Obinna 66).

Jan 12 - Benguela
Mozambique 2 (Mino 29, Goncalves Fumo 55)
Benin 2 (Omotyossi pen 15, Dario Khan pg 20)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Abdel Rahman (Sud)
Mozambique: Kampango - Campira, Dario Khan, Mexer, Paito, Simao, Domingues, Gerito (Momed Hagy 83), Mino, Tico-Tico (Danilo Parruque 86), Goncalves Fumo (Helder Pelembe 77).
Benin: Djidonou - Singbo (Imorou 65), Chrysostome, Adenon, Boco, Abouleye (Koukou 56), Tchomogo, Sessegnon, Pole, Ogunbiyi (Kobena 76), Omotyossi.

Jan 16 - Benguela
Nigeria 1 (Yakubu pen 42)
Benin 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 8,000. **Ref:** De Carvalho (Ang)
Nigeria: Enyeama - Mohamed, Echiejile, Shittu, Yobo (Agam 54), Etuhu, Mikel, Uche (Kalu 74), Yakubu (Obinna 59), Odemwingie, Obasi.
Benin: Chitou (Djidonou 72) - Adenon, Imorou (Singbo 66), Chrysostome, Koukou, Kobena (Seka 83), Tchomogo, Boco, Ogunbiyi, Sessegnon, Omotyossi.

Jan 16 - Benguela
Egypt 2 (Dario Khan og 47, Gedo 81)
Mozambique 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Djoupou (Tog)
Egypt: El Hadary - Fathy, Gomaa, Said (Al Muhammadi 49), Fathalla, Moawad, Abd Rabo, Shikabala (Gedo 69), Hassan, Zidan (Eid 57), Metwab.
Mozambique: Kampango - Campira, Dario Khan, Mexer, Paito, Simao, Domingues, Gerito (Danilo Parruque 87), Mino, Tico-Tico (Momed Hagy 68), Goncalves Fumo (Jasimar 53).

Jan 20 - Benguela
Egypt 2 (Al Muhammadi 7, Metwab 23)
Benin 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 12,500. **Ref:** Bennett (SAf)
Egypt: El Hadary (El Sayed 76) - Al Muhammadi, Sulem, El Saqua (Zidan 53), Fathalla, Abdel Shafy, Abd Rabo, Ghaly, Hassan, Raouf (Gedo 67), Metwab.
Benin: Djidonou - Singbo, Chrysostome, Adenon, Boco, Tchomogo (Amusaya 88), Angan (Aoudou 46), Koukou, Seka (Pede 76), Ogunbiyi, Omotyossi.

Jan 20 - Lubango
Nigeria 3 (Odemwingie 45, 47, Martins 85)
Mozambique 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 8,000. **Ref:** Coulibaly (Mli)
Nigeria: Enyeama - Aiyam, Echiejile, Mohamed, Shittu, Kanu, Etuhu (Yussuf 72), Mikel, Yakubu (Martins 67), Odemwingie (Obinna 84), Obasi.
Mozambique: Kampango - Fanuel, Dario Khan, Mino (Momed Hagy 75), Simao, Campira, Paito, Gerito (Jasimar 88), Domingues, Dario Monteiro (Danilo Parruque 84), Tico-Tico.

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP - GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Egypt	3	3	0	0	7	1	9
Nigeria	3	2	0	1	5	3	6
Benin	3	0	1	2	2	5	1
Mozambique	3	0	1	2	2	7	1

Group D

Jan 13 - Lubango
Cameroon 0
Gabon 1 (Cousin 17)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Bennett (SAf)
Cameroon: Kameni - N'Koulou, R Song, Bellima (Enoh 75), Geremi, A Song, Makoun, N'Guemo (Tchoyi 46), Emana, Webo (Idrissou 63), Eto'o.
Gabon: Ovono - Moundounga, Ecuele Manga, Brou, Ambourouet, Madiamba, Kessany, S Nguema, Mbanangoye (Djisiklodie 64), Meye (P-E Aubameyang 78), Cousin.

Jan 13 - Lubango
Zambia 1 (J Mulenga 18)
Tunisia 1 (Dhaouadi 40)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 17,000. **Ref:** Coulibaly (Mli)
Zambia: Mweene - Musonda, Sunzu, Kampamba, Mbola, Nyirenda, C Katongo, Kalaba, F Katongo, Chamanga (Mayuka 84), J Mulenga.
Tunisia: Mathlouthi - Souissi, Mikari, Haggui, Jemal, Ragued, Korbi, Darragi (Jemaa 62), Msakni (Nafkha 90), Chermiti (Ben Saada 81), Dhaouadi.

Jan 17 - Lubango
Gabon 0
Tunisia 0
Att: 18,000. **Ref:** Codjia (Ben)
Gabon: Ovono - Moundounga, Brou, Ecuele Manga, Ambourouet, P-E Aubameyang, Kessany, S Nguema (Djisiklodie 68), Mbanangoye, Moulengui (Meye 79), Cousin.
Tunisia: Mathlouthi - Ben Rachna, Haggui, Jemal, Mikari, Korbi, Ragued, Jemaa, Msakni (Ben Saada 83), Dhaouadi (Nafkha 87), Chermiti (Akaichi 70).

Jan 17 - Lubango
Cameroon 3 (Geremi 66, Eto'o 72, Idrissou 88)
Zambia 2 (J Mulenga 8, C Katongo pen 81)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Al Ghamdi (Sau)
Cameroon: Kameni - Geremi, N'Koulou, R Song, Bellima (Binya 46), Makoun, A Song, Mbila (Idrissou 46), Emana (Chedjou 76), Eto'o, Tchoyi.
Zambia: Mweene - Musonda (Mayuka 77), Sunzu, Kampamba, Mbola, C Katongo, Nyirenda, Kalaba (Kaserde 53), F Katongo (Chansa 62), J Mulenga, Chamanga.

Jan 21 - Benguela
Gabon 1 (F De Marcolino 83)
Zambia 2 (Kalaba 28, Chamanga 62)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 11,065. **Ref:** Benouza (Alg)
Gabon: Ovono - Moundounga, Brou, Ecuele Manga, Ambourouet, Djisiklodie (F De Marcolino 76), Kessany, Mbanangoye, Moulengui, Meye (P-E Aubameyang 61), Cousin.
Zambia: Mweene - Musonda, Nyirenda, Kampamba, Mbola, C Katongo, Sunzu, Kalaba (Njovu 64), Chamanga, F Katongo (Himoonde 86), J Mulenga (Chivuta 86).

Jan 21 - Lubango
Cameroon 2 (Eto'o 47, N'Guemo 84)
Tunisia 2 (Chermiti 1, Chedjou og 83)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 19,000. **Ref:** Doue (IvC)
Cameroon: Kameni - Mandjeck, N'Koulou, Chedjou, Binya (R Song 69), Makoun (Webo 46), A Song, Enoh, N'Guemo (Bikey 89), Idrissou, Eto'o.
Tunisia: Mathlouthi - Souissi, Mikari, Haggui, Jemal, Korbi, Ragued (Mrabet 85), Nafkha (Ben Saada 32), Jemaa, Chermiti (Akaichi 61), Dhaouadi. *Sent off: Jemal 68min.*

Retiring...Kanoute

172 caps Ahmed Hassan has won for Egypt, which is a record for an African player

for the defender, both his goals were in his own net – against Benin and Egypt.

NIGERIA

Out of action

Defender Yusuf Mohamed of Swiss side Sion could be out of action for a year after rupturing an Achilles tendon during Nigeria's African Nations Cup semi-final defeat by Ghana.

TUNISIA

Full-time appointment

Despite his side's failure to win a single game at the African Nations Cup, Tunisia coach Faouzi Benzarti has had his contract extended for two more years.

The 59-year-old had been appointed caretaker for the tournament in Angola, where Tunisia drew all three of their matches and finished last in their group.

Extension...Benzarti

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP – GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zambia	3	1	1	1	5	5	4
Cameroon	3	1	1	1	5	5	4
Gabon	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
Tunisia	3	0	3	0	3	3	3

Top two in each group qualified for quarter-finals

Quarter-finals

Jan 24 - Luanda
Angola 0
Ghana 1 (Gyan 16)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 50,000. **Ref:** Benouza (Alg)
Angola: Carlos - Stelvio (Job 57), Kali, Rui Marques, Matina, Zuela (Enekue 77), Xara, Gilberto (Ze Kalunga 74), Djalma, Manucho, Flavio.
Ghana: Kingson - Inkoom, Vorsah, Addy, Sarpei, Agyemang-Badu, Draman (Addo 79), Asamoah, A Ayew (R Ayew 90), Opoku, Gyan (Amoah 62).

Jan 24 - Cabinda
Ivory Coast 2 (Kalou 4, Keita 89)
Algeria 3 (Matmour 40, Bougherra 90, Bouazza 92)
Aet. **HT:** 1-1. **90mins:** 2-2. **Att:** 10,000.
Ref: Maillet (Sey)
Ivory Coast: Barry - Bemel, K Toure, Bamba, Tiene, Y Toure, Zokora (Dindane 96), Tiote (Fae 72), Kalou (Keita 83), Drogba, Gervinho.
Algeria: Chaouchi - Yahia (Raho 86), Halliche, Bougherra, Belhadj, Yebda, Mansouri, Zaoui (Abdoun 106), Meghni (Bouazza 91), Matmour, Ghezzal.

Jan 25 - Benguela
Egypt 3 (Hassan 37, 93, Gedo 92)
Cameroon 1 (Hassan og 26)
Aet. **HT:** 1-1. **90mins:** 1-1. **Att:** 12,000.
Ref: Damon (SAf)
Egypt: El Hadary - Al Muhammadi, Gomaa, Said, Fathalla, Moawad, Abd Rabo (Ghaly 85), Fathy, Hassan (Abdel Shafy 118), Zidan (Gedo 67), Moteab.
Cameroon: Kameni - Geremi (Bikey 106), Chedjou, N'Koulou, Berlima (Aio'o 105), Mandjeck, A Song, Eneh, Emana (Webo 68), Eto'o, Idrissou. *Sent off: Chedjou 112min.*

Jan 25 - Lubango
Zambia 0
Nigeria 0
Aet. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Abd El Fatah (Egy)
Nigeria 5-4 on pens:
Zambia: Mweene - Musonda, Sunzu, Himoonde, Mbela, Nyirenda, C Katongo, Njovu (C Mulenga 114), F Katongo (Chivuta 98), Chamanga (Mayuka 68), J Mulenga.
Nigeria: Enyeama - Mohamed, Shittu, Aiyam, Echiejile, Kaita, Mikel, Etuhu (Yussuf 62), Odemwingie, Yakubu (Martins 70), Obasi (Obinna 91). *Sent off: Aiyam 107min.*
Penalty shoot-out: *(Zambia first) Chivuta (1-0), Mikel (1-1); C Katongo (2-1), Martins (2-2), Mayuka (3-2), Obinna (3-3); Nyirenda (saved – 3-3), Odemwingie (3-4); Mweene (4-4), Enyeama (4-5).*

Semi-finals

Jan 28 - Luanda
Ghana 1 (Gyan 21)
Nigeria 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 7,500. **Ref:** Bennett (SAf)
Ghana: Kingson - Inkoom, Vorsah, Addy, Sarpei, A Ayew (R Ayew 94), A Ayew, Annan, Asamoah, Agyemang-Badu, Gyan (Amoah 85), Opoku (Dramani 28).
Nigeria: Enyeama - Mohamed (Udiah 86), Nwaneri, Shittu, Echiejile, Yussuf (Obinna 67), Mikel, Kaita, Odemwingie (Yakubu 72), Martins, Obasi.

Jan 28 - Benguela
Algeria 0
Egypt 4 (Abd Rabo pen 39, Zidan 65, Abdel Shafy 81, Gedo 90+3)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Codjia (Ben)
Algeria: Chaouchi - Yahia, Bougherra, Halliche, Belhadj, Matmour (Abdoun 74), Mansouri, Zaoui, Yebda, Meghni (Lafaoui 67), Ghezzal (Zemmamouche 88). *Sent off: Halliche 38min; Belhadj 70min, Chaouchi 87min.*
Egypt: El Hadary - Al Muhammadi, Gomaa, Said, Fathalla (Gedo 56), Moawad (Abdel Shafy 79), Abd Rabo, Fathy, Hassan, Zidan, Moteab (Ghaly 52).

Third-place play-off

Jan 30 - Benguela
Nigeria 1 (Obinna 35)
Algeria 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Diatta (Sen)
Nigeria: Enyeama - Udiah, Aiyam, Shittu, Taiwo, Uche (Martins 65), Kaita, Onifinjana, Obasi (Odemwingie 81), Kanu (Mikel 78), Obinna.
Algeria: Zemmamouche - Raho, Bougherra, Zaoui, Babouche, Meghni (Abdoun 59), Mansouri, Yebda, Ziani, Bouazza (Ziaya 59), Ghezzal (Saifi 85).

Final

Jan 31 - Luanda
Ghana 0
Egypt 1 (Gedo 85)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 45,000. **Ref:** Coulibaly (Mli)
Ghana: Kingson - Inkoom, Vorsah, Addy, Sarpei, A Ayew, Agyemang-Badu, Asamoah, Annan, Opoku (Addo 68), Gyan (Adjiyah 86).
Egypt: El Hadary - Al Muhammadi, Gomaa, Said, Moawad (Abdel Shafy 56), Abd Rabo, Fathy (Salem 89), Ghaly, Hassan, Zidan, Moteab (Gedo 70).

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS

Q (in tables) = qualified for the finals

Group A

Jan 6 - Manama
Bahrain 4 (Abdulatif 34, 40, 43, Al Dakheel 79)
Hong Kong 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 1,550. **Ref:** Balideh (Qat)

Jan 6 - Sana'a
Yemen 2 (Al Aqel 13, Karama 38)
Japan 3 (Hirayama 41, 55, 79)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Albadwawi (UAE)
Japan: Gonda - Makino, Kikuchi, Yoshida, Ota, Yamamura (Inui 46), Yonemoto, Kashiwagi, Yamada (Hirayama 21), Kenaszaki, Watanabe (Nagai 85).

Jan 20 - Sana'a
Yemen 3 (Al Nono 5, 25, Al Akiri 86)
Bahrain 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 7,000. **Ref:** Torky (Irn)

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Japan (Q)	5	4	0	1	15	4	12
Bahrain (Q)	5	4	0	1	12	4	12
Yemen	5	2	0	3	7	9	6
Hong Kong	5	0	0	5	1	16	0

Remaining games
03.03.10 Hong Kong-Yemen
03.03.10 Japan-Bahrain

Group B

Jan 6 - Jakarta
Indonesia 1 (Boas 45)
Oman 2 (Bashir 31, Al Ajmi 52)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 45,000. **Ref:** Mohd Salleh (Mly)

Jan 6 - Kuwait City
Kuwait 2 (Al Enezi 38, Nasser 43)
Australia 2 (Wilkshire 3, Heffernan 5)
HT: 2-2. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Irmatov (Uzb)
Australia: Galekovic - Kennip, Moore, Coleccimo, Heffernan, Jedinak, Wilkshire, Sterjovski (Rukavytsya 60), Carle (M Thompson 89), Vidosic, A Thompson (Djite 90).

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kuwait	5	2	2	1	6	5	8
Australia	5	2	2	1	5	4	8
Oman	5	2	1	2	4	4	7
Indonesia	5	0	3	2	3	5	3

Remaining games
03.03.10 Australia-Indonesia
03.03.10 Oman-Kuwait

Group C

Jan 6 - Dubai
United Arab Emirates 1 (Khalil 90)
Malaysia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 3,500. **Ref:** Basma (Syr)

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS – GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Uzbekistan (Q)	3	3	0	0	7	2	9
UAE (Q)	3	2	0	1	6	1	6
Malaysia	4	0	0	4	2	12	0

Remaining game
03.03.10 Uzbekistan-UAE

Group D

Jan 6 - Hangzhou
China 0
Syria 0
Att: 29,578. **Ref:** Toma (Jap)
China: Yang Zhi - Du Wei, Zhao Peng, Rong Hao, Zhao Xuri, Zhang Linpeng, Yang Hao, Yu Hai (Mao Jianqing 86), Shao Jiayi, Jiang Ning (Hao Junmin 80), Han Peng (Gu Bo 73).

Jan 6 - Sidon
Lebanon 1 (S Ali 20)
Vietnam 1 (Pham Thanh Luong 40)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Kowalenko (Uzb)

Jan 17 - Hanoi
Vietnam 1 (Le Cong Vinh pen 73)
China 2 (Yang Xu 34, Zheng Linpeng 43)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Abdul Bashir (Sin)
Sent off: Nguyen Viet Thang (Vietnam) 56min
China: Yang Zhi - Feng Xiaoting, Zhao Peng, Rong Hao, Zhao Xuri (Huang Bowen 69), Zhang Linpeng, Deng Zhuoxiang, Hao Junmin (Gao Lin 71), Yang Hao, Yu Hai, Yang Xu (Sun Xiang 85).

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS – GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
China (Q)	6	4	1	1	13	5	13
Syria (Q)	5	3	2	0	8	2	11
Vietnam	6	1	2	3	6	11	5
Lebanon	5	0	1	4	2	9	1

Remaining game
03.03.10 Syria-Lebanon

Group E

Jan 6 - Singapore
Singapore 1 (Noh Alam Shah 31)
Iran 3 (Aghili pen 11, Madanchi 12, G Rezaei 63)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 7,356. **Ref:** Sun (Chn)
Iran: Rahmati - P Nouri, Hosseini, Aghili, K Heydari, Teymourian, Madanchi, Hajsafy, Khalatbary (Kaebi 90), Zeinalpour (G Rezaei 57), Meydavoudi (Ansarifard 76).

Jan 6 - Bangkok
Thailand 0
Jordan 0
Att: 15,000. **Ref:** Williams (Aus)

ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS – GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Iran (Q)	5	3	1	1	10	2	10
Thailand	5	1	3	1	3	2	6
Singapore	5	2	0	3	5	13	6
Jordan	5	1	2	2	2	3	5

Remaining games
03.03.10 Iran-Thailand
03.03.10 Jordan-Singapore

Top two in each group qualify for the 16-team finals, to be played in 2011. Hosts Qatar qualify automatically, as do the best three sides from the 2007 Asian Cup finals – winners Iraq, runners-up Saudi Arabia and third-placed South Korea – and the winners of the AFC Challenge Cup in 2008 (India) and 2010.

King's Cup kings...Denmark

ARGENTINA
More for Maradona
Diego Maradona named nine newcomers in his squad for the friendly against Costa Rica. He has now called up more than 90 players in 14 months.

CHINA
National team first
Shandong Luneng defender Murehemaitijiang Mozhapa became the first Uigur player to represent China when he came on as a sub in a 4-0 victory over second division side Shanghai East Asia in a warm-up game before the East Asian Championship, to be held in Japan from February 6-14.

DENMARK
Home boys win
Rajko Lekic of Silkeborg, Odense BK's Johan Absalonsen and Martin Bernburg of Brondby were on target as a 3-0 victory over hosts Thailand gave a Denmark League XI a third consecutive win as they finished top of the four-team standings to retain the King's Cup.

ENGLAND
Mexican opposition
Fabio Capello's side will meet Mexico at Wembley, probably on May 24, in their penultimate game before the World Cup.

The final friendly is expected to be against Japan, in Austria.

NEW ZEALAND
South Africa build-up
The All Whites have lined up two World Cup warm-up games against fellow finalists. They will face Serbia at the end of May – on a date still to be agreed – in Austria, before

QATAR FOUR-NATION TOURNAMENT

In Doha

Dec 27
Mali 0
North Korea 1 (Hong Yong-jo 55)
HT: 0-0

Dec 28
Qatar 3 (Afeef 7, Hassan 10, 90)
Iran 2 (Zenidbaux 38, Hajsafy 46)
HT: 2-1
Iran: Rahmati - Beigzadeh (S Rezaei 63), P Nouri, Hosseini, Aghili, Kaebi, M Nouri (Teymourian 46), Hajsafy, Zenidpour, Meydavoudi (Khalili 81), Khalatbary.

Dec 30
Mali 2 (N'Diaye 29, 6 Ruoire 30)
Iran 1 (Ansarifard 19)
HT: 2-1
Iran: Feshangchi - Taleblou, Nosrati, S Heydari (Aghili 46), Teymourian, K Heydari, Zamiti (Meydavoudi 73), Madanchi, Khalili (Zeiddpour 46), Ansarifard, G Rezaei.

Dec 30
Qatar 0
North Korea 1 (Choe Choi-man 58)
HT: 0-0

Jan 2
Qatar 0
Mali 0

Jan 2
Iran 1 (Madanchi 42)
North Korea 0
HT: 1-0
Iran: Rahmati – P Nouri, Hosseini, Aghili, K Heydari, Teymourian, Madanchi, Hajsafy, Zenidpour, Ansarifard (Meydavoudi 69), Khalatbary (G Rezaei 82).
North Korea: Jun Kwang-min - Ryang Mong-il, Kim Myong-gyu (Jong Su-hyok 80), Chae Tu-yong (Ri Kwang-hyuk 41), Pak Song-chol, Choe Choi-man, Sing Yong-nam, Jon Kwok-ik (Pak Kwang-ryong 70), Yun Yong-il, Pak Yong-jin, Pak Nam-chol.

QATAR FOUR-NATION TOURNAMENT – FINAL							
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
North Korea	3	2	0	1	2	1	6
Qatar	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Mali	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
Iran	3	1	0	2	4	5	3

KING'S CUP

In Korat, Thailand

Jan 17
Danish League XI 3 (Rieks 22, M Rasmussen 47, Bech 80)
Poland 1 (Peszko 26)
HT: 1-1
Danish League XI: K Christensen - Jakobsen, A Christensen (Stadsgaard 69), Larsen, Nyimann, Bech (Bernburg 80), J Poulsen, Omskov (Wurtz 76), Absalonsen (Krohn-Dehli 66), Rieks (Thygesen 80), M Rasmussen (Lekic 76).
Poland: Pawelek - Mierzejewski, Jodlowiec, Sarlinic, Tosik (D Nowak 59), Peszko (Kleib 77), Bandrowski, Iwanski (T Nowak 85), Piotr Brozek (Brzyski 46), Rybus (Malecki 85), R Lewandowski (Robak 70).

Jan 17
Thailand 1 (Sutee 59)
Singapore 0
HT: 0-0
Thailand: Kawin - Suttinun, Natapom, Panupong, Rangsan, Datsakorn (Therdsak 80), Anawin (Narongchai 46), Sutee (Sompong 63), Pichitpong, Teerasteg, Keerati. *Sent off: Teerasteg 55min.*
Singapore: Sunny - Chiang (Noh 77), Alias, Baharudin, Shah, Mashadad (Sulaiman 65), Jiayi (Chong 90), Zailan, Ishak, Amri (Nawaz 6), Duric (Nizam 76).

Jan 20
Singapore 1 (Nawaz 83)
Danish League XI 5 (Larsen 7, J Poulsen pen 20, Lekic 34, Thygesen 48, Rieks 79)
HT: 0-3
Singapore: Sunny - Chiang, Alias, Baharudin, Shah, Ayob, Zailan, Mushadad, Ishak, Nawaz, Duric.
Danish League XI: S Rasmussen - Bernburg, Jessen, Krohn-Dehli (Rieks 76), Larsen (Jakobsen 64), Lekic (M Rasmussen 76), J Poulsen (Bech 46), Stadsgaard, Thomsen, Thygesen, Wurtz (Omskov 76).

Jan 20
Thailand 1 (Therdsak pen 90)
Poland 3 (Gik 43, Malecki 52, Robak 89)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Mbaga (Tan)
Thailand: Kawin - Suttinun (Panupong 78), Chonlatit, Natapom, Datsakorn (Sompong 46), Adul (Anon 58), Phichitpong, Therdsak, Rangsan, Sutee (Sunee 65), Keerati (Anawin 87).
Poland: Przyrowski - Mierzejewski, Jodlowiec, Gik (Piotr Brozek 78), Sadlok, Peszko, Bandrowski, Iwanski (Gol 83), Rybus (Brzyski 89), Malecki (Robak 70), R Lewandowski (T Nowak 89). *Sent off: Peszko 84min.*

Jan 23
Poland 6 (R Lewandowski pen 26, 37, Iwanski pen 45, Piotr Brozek 69, Malecki 80, T Nowak pen 88)
Singapore 1 (Jiayi 38)
HT: 3-1 **Ref:** Sikobe (Ken)
Poland: Przyrowski - Mierzejewski (Tosik 69), Jodlowiec, Gik, Sadlok, Kleib (Gol 46), Bandrowski (T Nowak 70), Iwanski, Rybos (Piotr Brozek 63), D Nowak (Malecki 63), R Lewandowski (Robak 46).
Singapore: Sunny - Baharudin, Chang (Alias 46), Yunos, Shah (Rahman 62), Ishak (Sulaiman 69), Jiayi, Mushadad (Ayob 82), Zailan (Noh 64), Nawaz (Nizam 46), Duric.

Jan 23
Thailand 0
Danish League XI 3 (Lekic 16, Absalonsen 36, Bernburg 86)
HT: 0-2
Thailand: Kittisak - Suttinun, Natapom, Panupong, Rangsan, Sunee, Chonlatit, Sutee, Narongchai, Teerasteg, Keerati.
Danish League XI: K Christensen - Absalonsen (Thygesen 58), A Christensen, Jessen (Jacobsen 71), Krohn-Dehli, Larsen, Lekic (Bernburg 58), Nymann (Thomsen 71), J Poulsen, Rieks (Bech 82), Omskov (Wurtz 82).

KING'S CUP – FINAL							
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Danish Lge XI	3	3	0	0	11	2	9
Poland	3	2	0	1	10	5	6
Thailand	3	1	0	2	2	6	3
Singapore	3	0	0	3	3	12	0

FRIENDLIES

Wednesday, December 16
Dec 16 - Kuwait City
Kuwait 0
United Arab Emirates 0

Saturday, December 19
Dec 19 - Songo
Mozambique 0
Malawi 1 (V Nyirenda 88)
HT: 0-0

Tuesday, December 22
Dec 22 - Barcelona
Catalonia 4 (Sergio Garcia 44, Bojan 55, Sergio Gonzalez pen 69, Moises 76)
Argentina 2 (Pastore 63, Di Maria 72)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 53,000. **Ref:** Alvarez Izquierdo (Spa)
Catalonia: Valdes (Codina 77) - Bruno, Puyol (Serrano 62), Oleguer, Capdevila, Xavi (Sergio Gonzalez 55), Pique (Moises 46), Busquets, Verdu, Bojan (Coro 65), Sergio Garcia (Fernando Navarro 73).
Argentina: Pozo - Alvarez (Salvio 79), Demichelis, Otamendi (Pareja 46), Papa (Botelo 62), Pastore, Belatti, Gago (Banega 76), Di Maria, Lavezzi, Higuain (Palermo 68).

Monday, December 28
Dec 28 - Johannesburg, South Africa
Zambia 1 (Mbesuma 76)
Mozambique 0
HT: 0-0

Tuesday, December 29
Dec 29 - Cairo
Egypt 1 (Abd Rabo pen 45)
Malawi 1 (C Masowya 87)
HT: 1-0
Egypt: El Hadary (El Sayed) – Emam (Al Muhammadi), Fathalla (Fathi), Gomaa (H Said), Fathy (Shaaban), Abdel Shafy (Moawad), Hassan (Ghaly), Abd Rabo (Gedo), Shikabala (Soliman), Metwab (Eid), Hossam (Hamdy).

Dec 29 - Bangkok
Thailand 3 (Suttinun 27, 81, Keerati 84)
Zimbabwe 0
HT: 1-0

Wednesday, December 30
Dec 30 - Vila Real, Portugal
Angola 0
Estonia 1 (Saag 78)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Nuno Almeida (Por)
Angola: Carlos (Lamy 46) - Enoque, Kaio, Rui Marques (Bijalma 46), Zuela, Flavio (Job 46), Dede, David (Jamuana 46), Johnson 83), Manucho, Matima (Dias Caires 46), Stelvio.
Estonia: Aksalu - Sisov, Berengrub, Morozov, Teniste (Kenns 51), Kink (Vikmae 64), E Puri (Lindpere 46), Vassiljev, Siderenkov, Voskoboinikov (Saag 46), Purje.

Dec 30 - Jinan
China 2 (Zhang Linpeng 48, Han Peng 56)
Jordan 2 (Shelbaieh 71, 78)
HT: 0-0

Dec 30 - Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia 4 (Rahim pen 31, pen 80, Abdul Radzak 78, Gunasamy 90)
Syria 1 (Hamidi pen 67)
HT: 1-0

Dec 30 - Sana'a
Yemen 2 (Baleid 71, Al Nimo 85)
Tajikistan 1 (Rabimov 35)
HT: 0-1

Thursday, December 31
Dec 31 - Bishan
Singapore 1 (Basti 76)
Oman 4 (Bashir 15, Karim 20, Ali 34, Hadid 69)
HT: 0-3

Saturday, January 2
Jan 2 - Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Syria 6 (Al Hussein 36, 43, 67, 85, Ismail 52, Abdullah 76)
Zimbabwe 0
HT: 2-0

Jan 2 - Sana'a
Yemen 0
Tajikistan 1 (Tokhtasunov 70)
HT: 0-0

Sunday, January 3
Jan 3 - Vila Real, Portugal
Angola 1 (Manucho 29)
Gambia 1 (Sidna 4)
HT: 1-1
Angola: Carlos (Wilson 46) - Enoque (Ze Kalanga 70), Kali, Rui Marques, Dias Caires (Zuela 46), Kara, Matima (Jamuana 60), Gilberto, Flavio (Love 42), Dede, Manucho (Mandorras 60).

Monday, January 4
Jan 4 - Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Mali 0
Egypt 1 (Gedo 65)
HT: 0-0
Egypt: El Hadary - Al Muhammadi (Shikabala), Gomaa (Said), Fathalla, Moawad (Abdel Shafy), Abd Rabo, Ghaly, Fathy, Hossam (Gedo), Zidan (Eid), Metwab (El Sayed). *Sent off: Ghaly 54min.*

Jan 4 - Dar es Salaam
Tanzania 0
Ivory Coast 1 (Drogba 37)
HT: 0-1
Ivory Coast: Barry (Angban 75) - Eboue (Boka 46), Tiene (Angoua 46), K Toure (Demel 46), Bamba (Meite 46), Zokora (Gosso 46), Fae (Tiote 46), Y Toure (E Konie 46), Kalou (Gervinho 46), Keita (B Konie 46), Drogba (Bindane 46).

Tuesday, January 5
Jan 5 - Manzini, Swaziland
Ghana 0
Malawi 0

Wednesday, January 6
Jan 6 - Cotonou
Benin 1 (Sessegnon 19)
Libya 0
HT: 1-0

Jan 6 - Bloemfontein, South Africa
Gabon 2 (Fallael og 5, Cousin 76)
Mozambique 0
HT: 1-0

Jan 6 - Durban, South Africa
Zambia 0
Nigeria 0

crossing the border to meet Slovenia in Maribor on June 4.

NORTH KOREA

Victory in Qatar

Kim Jong-hun's side received a boost ahead of the World Cup finals with victory in the round-robin Qatar Four-Nation Tournament. The Chollima beat Mali 1-0 with a goal from Hong Yong-jo and then overcame the hosts by the same score, with a strike from Choe Chol-man, before losing 1-0 to Iran in their final game.

Victorious...North Korea (right)

SOUTH AFRICA

Durban opening

The World Cup hosts beat Zimbabwe 3-0 in a friendly at the Moses Mabhida Stadium in Durban – the first game they have played in one of the newly completed stadiums for this summer's finals.

SPAIN

Trio for Euro champs

The European champions will play three friendlies in the weeks leading up to the start of the World Cup. They will meet Liechtenstein in Vaduz on May 29, before playing South Korea on June 3 in Innsbruck, Austria. A third game is being arranged for June 8, but their opponents have yet to be determined.

Home...South Africa's Lucas Thwala (right)

Thursday, January 7
Jan 7 - Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Rwanda 0
Ivory Coast 2 (Bamba 85, Angoua 90)
HT: 0-0
Ivory Coast: Barry (Zogbe 72) - Eboue (Angoua 85), Tiene (Boka 68), K Toure, Meite (Bamba 46), Zokora (Fae 69), Tiote (Gosso 64), E Kone (Y Toure 46), B Kone (Keita 46), Gervinho (Kalou 46), Drogba (Dindane 69).

Saturday, January 9
Jan 9 - Nairobi
Kenya 1 (Situma 8)
Cameroon 3 (Webo 36, Emana 56, Idriissou 58)
HT: 1-1
Cameroon: Kameni - Geremi, N'Koulou, R Song, Bedimo, Mbia, Nguemo, Makoun, Tchoyi, Webo, Emana.

Jan 9 - Tunis
Tunisia 1 (Chermiti 90)
Gambia 2 (Sumba 57, Mussy 85)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Himoudi (Alg)
Tunisia: Netzi - Ben Radhia (Ra 62), Haggui, Felhi, Mikari (Chermiti 46), Korbi (Nafkha 68), Rugued, Barragi (Msakni 35), Ben Saada (Draouad 74), Jemaa (Akaichi 63), Cherniti.

Jan 9 - Johannesburg, South Africa
Zambia 4 (F Katongo 6, Kalaba 14, Chamunga 63, Chiwula pen 72)
South Korea 2 (Kim Jong-woo 35, Koo Ja-cheol 83)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Gomes (SAf)
Zambia: Mweene - Musonda, Mylenda, Kangamba, Sunzu, Njovu (Kasonde 75), Kalaba (C Mulenga 75), J Mulenga (Mbesuma 63), F Katongo (Chivuta 37), Chamunga (Mayuka 63), C Katongo (Chaliza 75).
South Korea: Lee Woon-jae - Choi Chul-soon, Cho Yong-hyung, Lee Jung-soo (Lee Kyu-ro 46), Kang Min-soo, Kim Jung-woo (Koo Ja-cheol 64), Kim Jae-sung (Lee Seung-hyun 76), Kim Do-heon, Yeom Ki-hun (Kim Bo-kyung 46), Na Byung-jun (Lee Seung-yeoul 80), Lee Dong-gook (Kim Shin-wook 46).

Friday, January 15
Jan 15 - Sana'a
Yemen 3 (Al Noro 45, Al Sab 46, 50)
Kenya 1 (Owino 11)
HT: 1-1

Saturday, January 16
Jan 16 - Kaohsiung
Taiwan 0
Philippines 0

Monday, January 18
Jan 18 - Malaga, Spain
Finland 0
South Korea 2 (Oh Beom-seok 39, Lee Jung-soo 61)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 270. **Ref:** Barbalac (Spa)
Finland: Fredriksson - Hyman, Lyyski, Halsti, Ahn, Perexiso (Araujuri 65), Savolainen, Porokara (Ojala 68), Vuorinen (Fuulhorn 74), Littunen (Hamalainen 66), Johansson (Sorsa 60).
South Korea: Lee Woon-jae - Oh Beom-seok, Cho Yong-hyung, Lee Jung-soo (Kang Min-soo 85), Park Joo-ho, Na Byung-jun (Lee Seung-yeoul 72), Shin Hyung-min (Koo Ja-cheol 78), Kim Jung-woo, Kim Bo-kyung (Kim Do-heon 36), Yeom Ki-hun, Lee Dong-gook.

Wednesday, January 20
Jan 20 - Coquimbo
Chile 2 (Paredes 51, 53)
Panama 1 (Brown 88)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Vazquez (Uru)
Chile: Toselli - Fuenzalida, H Martinez, Estrada, Cereceda (J Martinez 73), Aranguiz, Puch (Vargas 82), Millar, Gazale, Paredes, Hernandez (Castro 65).
Panama: Calderon - Moreno, Machado, Rivera, Camargo (Gomez 73), Phillips (Parrish 65), Henriquez (Amor 88), Velez, Torres (McClean 58), Rodriguez (Cooper 57), Aguilar (Brown 76).
Sent off: Velez 64min.

Jan 20 - Muscat
Oman 0
Sweden 1 (A Svensson 35)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 1,000. **Ref:** Nawaf Shukr Allah (Bhr)
Sweden: Orlund - Lustig (Lund 76), Karlsson, Sederberg, Dorsin, S Eriksson (Helmen 44), A Svensson (T Eriksson 64), Mollins, P Farnerud, Bajrami (A Farnerud 64), D Larsson (Ranegie 76).

Friday, January 22
Jan 22 - Malaga, Spain
Latvia 0
South Korea 1 (Kim Jae-sung 55)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 150. **Ref:** Carballo (Spa)
Latvia: Vanins (Kolinko 46) - Krjauklis, Gorkss, Mihadjuks, Kazakevs, Kosmacevs (Fertovs 70), Kolesnicenko, Rubins (Blanks 81), Solonicins (Digajevs 65), Perepolkins (Lukjanovs 63), Radnevs (Karlsons 63).
South Korea: Jung Sung-ryong - Kang Min-soo, Cho Yong-hyung, Lee Jung-soo, Oh Beom-seok (Lee Kyu-ro 75), Park Joo-ho, Kim Jung-woo (Kim Do-heon 81), Koo Ja-cheol (Shin Hyung-min 72), Na Byung-jun (Kim Jae-sung 46), Yeom Ki-hun, Lee Dong-gook (Kim Shin-wook 61).

Saturday, January 23
Jan 23 - Damascus
Syria 1 (Rafe 5)
Sweden 1 (Ranegie 87)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Najm (Leb)
Sweden: Dahlin - Lustig (Lund 46), Ekstrand, Almebaeck, E Johansson (Dorsin 24), Holmen (P Farnerud 81), A Svensson, Ishizaki (Mollins 76), A Farnerud (T Eriksson 46), Bajrami (D Larsson 68), Ranegie.

Jan 23 - Carson
United States 1 (Goodson 69)
Honduras 3 (Payon pen 19, Jerry Palacios 37, Espinoza 52)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 18,626. **Ref:** Archundia (Mex)
United States: Perkins - Bornstein, Conrad, Marshall (Pearce 61), Wynne, Rogers (Davis 81), Feilhaber (McCarty 77), Beckerman (Casey 60), Kljestan (Bradley 61), Cunningham (Goodson 46), Findley. *Sent off: Conrad 17min.*
Honduras: Escober - Morales, Johnny Palacios, Sabillon, Espinoza (Acevedo 90), Turcios, Guevara (M Valladares 56), Izaguirre, W Martinez (Garcia 68), Paven (Welcome 78), Jerry Palacios (Nunez 81).

Tuesday, January 26
Jan 26 - San Juan
Argentina 3 (Sosa 11, G Burdisso 38, Jara 80)
Costa Rica 2 (Barrantes 21, Madrigal 77)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Amarilla (Par)
Argentina: Campestrini - C Rodriguez, Matheu (Caruzzo 5), G Burdisso, Monzon, Sosa, Mercier (Razzotti 69), Erviti (Perez 46), Gaitan (Insua 46), Heuche (Jara 62), Palermo (Boselli 73).
Costa Rica: Navas - Delgado, Maitland, Sequeira, Gamboa, Granados (Madrigal 46), Barrantes (Guzman 69), Oviedo, Monge (Estrada 61), Jimenez (Fernandez 57), Urena.
Wednesday, January 27
Jan 27 - Durban
South Africa 3 (Tshabalala 50, Mbuyane 75, Thwala 90)
Zimbabwe 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 30,000
South Africa: Baron - Gaxa, Gould, Sangweni, Thwala, Modise (Jali 87), Khuhoni, Letsholonyane (Davids 66), Tshabalala (Zale 63), Schalkwyk (Mbuyane 68), Mphela (Hlongwane 72).

Sunday, January 31
Jan 31 - Kingston
Jamaica 1 (Shelton 68)
Canada 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Hospedales (T&T)
Jamaica: Miller - Marshall, Thomas, J Taylor, Morrison (R Johnson 71), Austin (Edwards 79), Vernon (Forbes 74), Phillips, Shelton (Boyd 70), Cummings (Daley 79), Hodges.
Canada: Morsalvo - Sidra (Edwini-Bonsu 77), Hainault, Jakovic, Jazic, Ademola (Attakora 71), Hemming, De Guzman, Ribeiro (Cann 42, Rivas 88), Wessey, Gerba.

WORLD CUP FINALS

In South Africa

Match schedule

Group A

Jun 11	South Africa v Mexico (Jo'burg SC; 16:00)
Jun 11	Uruguay v France (Cape Town; 20:30)
Jun 16	South Africa v Uruguay (Pretoria; 20:30)
Jun 17	France v Mexico (Polokwane; 20:30)
Jun 22	Mexico v Uruguay (Rustenburg; 16:00)
Jun 22	France v South Africa (Bloemfontein; 16:00)

Group B

Jun 12	Sth Korea v Greece (Pt Elizabeth; 13:30)
Jun 12	Argentina v Nigeria (Jo'burg EP; 16:00)
Jun 17	Argentina v Sth Korea (Jo'burg SC; 13:30)
Jun 17	Greece v Nigeria (Bloemfontein; 16:00)
Jun 22	Nigeria v Sth Korea (Durban; 20:30)
Jun 22	Greece v Argentina (Polokwane; 20:30)

Group C

Jun 12	England v USA (Rustenburg; 20:30)
Jun 13	Algeria v Slovenia (Polokwane; 13:30)
Jun 18	Slovenia v USA (Jo'burg EP; 16:00)
Jun 18	England v Algeria (Cape Town; 20:30)
Jun 23	Slovenia v England (Port Elizabeth; 16:00)
Jun 23	USA v Algeria (Pretoria; 16:00)

Group D

Jun 13	Serbia v Ghana (Pretoria; 16:00)
Jun 13	Germany v Australia (Durban; 20:30)
Jun 18	Germany v Serbia (Port Elizabeth; 13:30)
Jun 19	Ghana v Australia (Rustenburg; 16:00)
Jun 23	Ghana v Germany (Jo'burg SC; 20:30)
Jun 23	Australia v Serbia (Nelspruit; 20:30)

Group E

Jun 14	Holland v Denmark (Jo'burg SC; 13:30)
Jun 14	Japan v Cameroon (Bloemfontein; 16:00)
Jun 19	Holland v Japan (Durban; 13:30)
Jun 19	Cameroon v Denmark (Pretoria; 20:30)
Jun 24	Denmark v Japan (Rustenburg; 20:30)
Jun 24	Cameroon v Holland (Cape Town; 20:30)

Group F

Jun 14	Italy v Paraguay (Cape Town; 20:30)
Jun 15	N Zealand v Slovakia (Rustenburg; 13:30)
Jun 20	Slovakia v Paraguay (Bloemfontein; 13:30)
Jun 20	Italy v New Zealand (Nelspruit; 16:00)
Jun 24	Slovakia v Italy (Jo'burg EP; 16:00)
Jun 24	Paraguay v N Zealand (Polokwane; 16:00)

Group G

Jun 15	Ivory Coast v Portugal (Pt Elizabeth; 16:00)
Jun 15	Brazil v North Korea (Jo'burg EP; 20:30)
Jun 20	Brazil v Ivory Coast (Jo'burg SC; 20:30)
Jun 21	Portugal v North Korea (Cape Town; 13:30)
Jun 25	Portugal v Brazil (Durban; 16:00)
Jun 25	North Korea v Ivory Coast (Nelspruit; 16:00)

Group H

Jun 16	Honduras v Chile (Nelspruit; 13:30)
Jun 16	Spain v Switzerland (Durban; 16:00)
Jun 21	Chile v Switzerland (Port Elizabeth; 16:00)
Jun 21	Spain v Honduras (Jo'burg EP; 20:30)
Jun 25	Chile v Spain (Pretoria; 20:30)
Jun 25	Switzerland v Honduras (Bl'fontein; 20:30)

1st knockout round

Jun 26	Gp A 1st v Gp B 2nd (Pt Elizabeth; 16:00) (1)
Jun 26	Gp C 1st v Gp D 2nd (Rust'burg; 20:30) (2)
Jun 27	Gp D 1st v Gp C 2nd (Bl'fontein; 16:00) (3)
Jun 27	Gp B 1st v Gp A 2nd (Jo'burg SC; 20:30) (4)
Jun 28	Gp E 1st v Gp F 2nd (Durban; 16:00) (5)
Jun 28	Gp G 1st v Gp H 2nd (Jo'burg EP; 20:30) (6)
Jun 29	Gp F 1st v Gp E 2nd (Pretoria; 16:00) (7)
Jun 29	Gp H 1st v Gp G 2nd (Cape Town; 20:30) (8)

Quarter-finals

Jul 2	Match 5 v Match 6 (Pt Elizabeth; 16:00) (A)
Jul 2	Match 1 v Match 2 (Jo'burg SC; 20:30) (B)
Jul 3	Match 4 v Match 3 (Cape Town; 16:00) (C)
Jul 3	Match 7 v Match 8 (Jo'burg EP; 20:30) (D)

Semi-finals

Jul 6	Match B v Match A (Cape Town; 20:30)
Jul 7	Match C v Match D (Durban; 20:30)

Third-place play-off

Jul 10	(Port Elizabeth; 20:30)

Final

Jul 11	(Jo'burg SC; 20:30)

Jo'burg SC – Johannesburg Soccer City
Jo'burg EP – Johannesburg Ellis Park
Kick-off times are local

AFC CHALLENGE CUP FINALS

In Colombo, Sri Lanka

Match schedule

Group A

Feb 16	Tajikistan v Bangladesh
Feb 16	Myanmar v Sri Lanka
Feb 18	Sri Lanka v Tajikistan
Feb 18	Bangladesh v Myanmar
Feb 20	Tajikistan v Myanmar
Feb 20	Sri Lanka v Bangladesh

Group B

Feb 17	India v Kyrgyzstan
Feb 17	North Korea v Turkmenistan
Feb 19	Kyrgyzstan v North Korea
Feb 19	Turkmenistan v India
Feb 21	India v North Korea
Feb 21	Turkmenistan v Kyrgyzstan

Semi-finals

Feb 24	

Third-place play-off

Feb 27	

Final

Feb 27	

Winners qualify for 2011 Asian Cup in Qatar

African Nations Cup Egypt make history

Opener...Flavio (No 16) celebrates his opening goal of the tournament, for Angola against Mali, with team-mate Rui Marques

GROUP A

A DRAW of convenience in their final game meant hosts Angola and Algeria went through from the group in unsavoury circumstances, prompting an unsuccessful protest from third-placed Mali.

Angola finished top, with Algeria also advancing by virtue of their head-to-head result against Mali – even though they had an inferior goal difference to the third-placed side.

The goalless draw between Angola and Algeria in their last group game served both their causes, with the hosts staying in the capital for the quarter-final and the World Cup-bound Algerians scrapping through in unconvincing style.

The last 20 minutes of the match were decidedly lethargic as both teams seemed to settle for the draw, but to suggest the game was fixed would be hard to prove and thus Mali's efforts at redress fell on deaf ears.

The group got off to a sensational start with Angola contriving to throw away a four-goal lead, including two penalties, in front of an expectant 50,000-strong home crowd.

Mali's comeback included scoring twice in stoppage time at the end of the game, with Seydou Keita delivering the equaliser after a slip from Angola's new goalkeeper Carlos Fernandes.

What had promised to be a dream start fell flat for the hosts, but to their credit they bounced back against Malawi with a 2-0 win in the next match and then a draw with Algeria to ensure five points.

Both Angola and Algeria settled for the draw, but to suggest the game was fixed would be hard to prove

Algeria were hammered in their opening game, with their shock 3-0 loss to Malawi arguably among the biggest surprises at this tournament for decades.

Malawi were making only their second African Nations Cup finals appearance and had never won a match before, but they found Algeria unable to deal with the heat and humidity.

An embarrassing start for the north Africans was followed by an unconvincing win in their second match, but a 1-0 win over Mali was enough to get them back on track.

With head-to-head the new tie-breaker for teams tied on points, it handed Algeria a massive advantage.

Mali had produced a wondrous comeback against Angola but they looked disjointed and without a game plan in going down to Algeria. Frederic Kanoute was out of sorts and only came on in the second half, while Momo Sissoko's passing was poor and rarely reached where intended.

It meant that even though they beat Malawi in their last game, Mali did not make it through, spelling the end for coach Stephen Keshi.

GROUP B

TOGO'S departure on the eve of the tournament left just three teams in this group and also cut in half the number of fixtures in Cabinda's new stadium. Security was omnipresent after the attack on the Togo bus, an incident without precedent in African sporting history.

Burkina Faso were left to take on the might of two World Cup qualifiers, Ivory Coast and Ghana, and threatened to upset the expected order. Their first game was expertly executed with a dour defensive strategy that achieved a goalless draw with the Ivorians and

kept the likes of Didier Drogba, Salomon Kalou and Bakary Kone in check. Mamadou Tall and Paul Koulibaly, in particular, were stellar in defence and Charles Kabore impressed in the middle.

It left the Ivorians decidedly vulnerable for their next encounter against Ghana, but they were to ensure a quarter-final place with an emphatic 3-1 win. Ghana had spent nine days sitting around waiting to get their campaign underway, having had their opening match cancelled following Togo's withdrawal.

The Ivorians were ahead by half-time and even the introduction of Michael Essien, still recovering from a hamstring injury suffered in the UEFA Champions League in November, failed to halt their advance. However, the Ivorians still had to await the outcome of the last match between Ghana and Burkina Faso to see whether they finish first or second.

The Burkinabe needed only a draw to progress but did not come out to defend as they had in the first game. It meant a slip at the back allowed Andre Ayew to give Ghana the lead with a close-range header, and when Tall was sent off in the second half there was no chance of any comeback. It was also the first glimpse of Ghana's own prowess at the back, a quality that was to serve them well in the knockout stages.

GROUP C

EGYPT finished the first round as the only side with a 100 per cent record, romping through their group and ensuring they remained comfortably ensconced in their Benguela base, away from the mayhem of Luanda, the chill of Lubango and the tension of Cabinda.

Teamwork and a family attitude, their coach Hassan Shehata was to explain later, was vital in their march on the title and reaching the winners podium was built on solid foundations established in the early stages.

Egypt went a goal down in the opening game to Nigeria, with Chinedu Obasi blasting home a superb individual effort, but came back for an easy win in what was always going to be the key game of the group.

Veteran captain Ahmed Hassan was at the heart of Egypt's success, setting up the first and scoring their second. Moteab and substitute Gedo also scored.

Benin took advantage of two comical errors from Mozambique to lead 2-0 but then contrived to let their opponents back in for a 2-2 draw.

Benin were more competitive

Big presence...Ghana's Samuel Inkoom (left) struggles to contain Ivory Coast striker Drogba

On target...Bouazza (second left) scores for Algeria against Ivory Coast in their quarter-final

next against Nigeria but succumbed to Yakubu Aiyegbeni's penalty after an unfortunate handball by their Irish-based defender Romuald Boco. They might even have stolen a draw were it not for some woeful defending.

Mozambique defender Dario Khan scored a second own goal in as many matches as his side lost 2-0 to Egypt. While they did show some fighting quality, Mozambique were patently never a match for the powers of the Pharaohs, who were guaranteed top spot after just two matches.

Despite the defeat, Mozambique held out hopes of beating Nigeria in Lubango to steal a surprise second place, taking heart from two close fought matches in World Cup qualifiers in the preceding nine months.

But this time Nigeria were too strong and won 3-0, while Egypt's 2-0 victory over Benin ended the challenge of the small west African country too. It also saw Egypt set a new mark for the longest unbeaten run in finals history, their 16-game tally surpassing the old mark held by Cameroon.

GROUP D

IT needed several re-reads of the rule book to figure out the final permutations after three sides finished even on four points. Gabon thought they had gone through and celebrated despite losing their last game 2-1 to Zambia, but they were pipped by Cameroon and Zambia in a countback of their previous head-to-head results, goal difference and finally goals scored. Gabon were cruelly informed of their plight only after they had returned to their changing room.

Zambia, despite only winning their last game, headed the group with Cameroon second. Tunisia went home unbeaten after three successive draws.

Gabon started with a shock victory over Cameroon, who they had twice lost to in the last six months in the qualifying campaign. Daniel Cousin's early goal was a setback from which the Indomitable Lions never recovered.

Zambia and Tunisia drew their first encounter, with the unfancied Zambians showing enough to suggest they would be no pushover in their next two matches.

Indeed, they took the game to Cameroon next and were ahead at half-time in Lubango, looking odds on to eliminate the World Cup-bound side. But two quick goals turned things around, with Samuel Eto'o grabbing his first of the finals.

Ahead of the tournament Eto'o had, perhaps foolishly, declared his desire to break the record for the most goals in a single finals. That nine-goal tally, set back in 1974 by Mulamba Ndaye of Zaire, looked a veritable mountain to climb even for a player of his quality as around him the rest of the Cameroon side failed to inspire.

Zambia came back into the match with a penalty 10 minutes from time after yet another error from Rigobert Song, the ageing defender's form suggesting he might even be lucky

Gabon thought they had gone through...and were informed of their plight only after they had returned to their changing room

Three's a crowd...Benin close down Nigeria's Peter Odemwingie (in green)

The unknown...Gabon await the result from the Cameroon-Tunisia game thinking they have qualified despite their defeat by Zambia

to make the World Cup squad.

But, as they often do, Cameroon willed their way to victory with a late winner for a 3-2 triumph.

Gabon and Tunisia drew, which meant, going into the last group games, Gabon were favourites to finish top, needing only a draw with Zambia, and the winner of the Cameroon-Tunisia game taking the other place.

In the end, Gabon were eliminated and the 2-2 draw between Cameroon and Tunisia included a second – and last – goal of the tournament for Eto'o.

On top...Egypt's Ahmed Al Muhammadi (no3) beats Landry N'Guemo of Cameroon

QUARTER-FINALS

TWO of the teams headed to the World Cup exited the African Nations Cup in disappointing fashion, with Ivory Coast beaten in extra time by Algeria and Egypt ousting Cameroon.

Elsewhere, Ghana ended the dreams of the host nation while Nigeria needed penalties to edge past a gallant Zambia side.

Ivory Coast were particularly disappointing, throwing away a 2-1 lead going into stoppage time at the end of their game in Cabinda and then losing in extra time to a spirited Algeria team.

The Ivorians threatened to run away with the game after Salomon Kalou had given them an early lead. But their supremacy did not last as Karim Matmour equalised and Algeria took control of the match.

The late introduction of Kader Keita by an increasingly concerned Ivorian side looked a master stroke as he produced a thumping long-range goal, arguably the best of the tournament, to seemingly secure a win at the death.

But just minutes later, with the game in stoppage time, Algeria managed an equaliser through the determination of defender Majid Bougherra, who willed a bouncing ball into the goal as he also miscued his close-range header.

The north Africans looked more determined in extra time and got their rewards with Hameur Bouazza's winner. He was gifted a free header after some particularly poor defending.

Asamoah Gyan provided the body blow to the hopes of the Angolan nation with a simple angled shot that crept wide of goalkeeper Carlos for the only goal of the match between the hosts and Ghana in Luanda. While the final touch was perfectly placed, what made the goal special was the delivery of the pass from midfield from Kwadwo Asamoah, who was Ghana's man of the match. He threaded the ball through with the perfect weight for Gyan to run onto and place into the net for a semi-final berth.

Egypt captain Hassan marked his record-breaking 170th cap with an own goal but then engineered a fantastic turnaround as Egypt beat Cameroon 3-1 after extra time.

Hassan managed to flick the ball past his own goalkeeper at the near post but equalised himself with a dipping shot that goalkeeper Carlos Kameni made a hash of.

Two minutes into extra time, substitute Gedo put Egypt into a 2-1 lead as he stole in to tuck away a shallow back pass from veteran full-back Geremi.

Three minutes later, a controversial third followed as Hassan's free-kick, which was partially blocked by Kameni and bounced back off the woodwork, was adjudged to have crossed the line. Replays showed it to be an erroneous decision by Rwanda assistant referee Celestin Ntagungira.

The last of the quarter-final

Super sub...Gedo's winning goal in the Final was his fifth of the tournament

places was taken by Nigeria, who were outplayed by Zambia in Lubango but managed to hold on to take the game to penalties.

Young full-back Thomas Nyrienda had his kick saved as the Super Eagles went through 5-4 on penalties.

SEMI-FINALS

TALK of revenge seemed a simplistic tag to put on the semi-final between Algeria and Egypt, but there were suddenly two days of tension in Benguela before the match. Riot police were even dispatched to "deal" with a gaggle of television crews sneaking to snatch pictures of Algeria's training in one of several heavy-handed incidents during the tournament.

Egypt's Mohamed Zidan was the only player who spoke before the game of seeking to even the score after his country's elimination in the World Cup qualifiers by Algeria.

And so it proved in another bizarre game that included three red cards and the referee being butted. Algeria goalkeeper Faouzi Chaouchi faces a lengthy ban and Nadir Belhadj could also miss the World Cup if he gets a maximum four match ban for his red-card tackle during the game, which was over as a contest long before the final whistle.

Egypt were 1-0 ahead at the interval after Rafik Halliche had given away a penalty, converted by Hosni Abd Rabou in the 39th minute.

The tackle brought a second yellow card inside eight minutes for the Algeria defender, and the manner in which Abd Rabou took the penalty, feigning first before shooting, so incensed Chaouchi that he ran after the referee, grabbed him by the collar and butted him. Having just sent a player off, Bonaventure Coffi Codjia chose to completely ignore the incident and, having written nothing of it in his match report, has since been suspended by the Confederation of African Football.

Egypt overran Algeria in the second half but only made sure of progressing once Zidan produced a stunning left-footed finish in the 65th minute.

Six minutes later Algeria were down to nine men when a wild two-footed lunge from Belhadj saw him handed a straight red card.

Substitutes Mohamed Abdel Shafy and Gedo added two more late goals, while Chaouchi eventually did get his marching orders, sent off for a second yellow card, after a wild kick at an advancing Egyptian player with four minutes left.

The other semi-final in Luanda was a distinctly tamer affair in which Gyan scored Ghana's winner just before the half-hour mark from a corner and then watched as his team-mates defended stoutly to hold off Nigeria for an emotional win.

FINAL

THE Final promised to be a major mismatch given the gulf in experience between much-fancied Egypt and the young Ghanaian upstarts, but the game proved otherwise.

A close contest saw Ghana disciplined in defence and quicker around the heavy pitch than the tired-looking Egyptians. Opportunities were limited to long-range shots and Egypt looked increasingly frustrated as they were smothered out of the midfield and unable to use the flanks.

After five games in Benguela, the Egyptians looked distinctly uncomfortable on the bigger field at Luanda's November 11th Stadium. Hassan tried several shots but did not find his range, while Gyan came much closer for Ghana. Midway through the second half Egypt had two chances but on both occasions Moteab and then Zidan were let down by a poor first touch.

The winning goal came just as the crowd were settling for the prospect of extra time. Super sub Gedo provided the all-important finish from a tight angle, almost out of nowhere in a rare attack from the defending champions. He played a quick one-two with Zidan to deliver the killer blow as Egypt looked to be tiring and Ghana were on the ascendancy.

Mark Gleeson

• *For results, line-ups and full details, see page 84. For squads, see page 110*

The Final promised to be a major mismatch, given the gulf in experience, but the game proved otherwise

History boys...Egypt celebrate a record-breaking seventh African Nations Cup success

PEOPLE in the news

Veh on his way

Veh...out

EUROPE

German champions Wolfsburg sacked coach ARMIN VEH after a 3-2 home loss to Koln – their seventh Bundesliga game without a win. The former Stuttgart boss was appointed last summer following the departure of Felix Magath to Schalke.

Loan...Adu

Former Brazil international EDMILSON returned to Spain, joining Zaragoza from Palmeiras.

Brazilian MANCINI left Internazionale for cross-town rivals Milan, who also signed Ghanaian youngster DOMINIC ADIYIAH from Fredrikstad of Norway.

USA forward FREDDY ADU joined Greek club Aris on loan from Benfica for the rest of the season.

Kenyan midfielder McDONALD MARIGA joined Internazionale from Parma after a move to Manchester City fell through when he was refused a work permit by the UK government.

Spanish mission...Tiago

Atletico Madrid signed Portuguese midfielder TIAGO on loan from Juventus.

Juventus picked up Italy international ANTONIO CANDREVA from Udinese and MICHELE PAOLUCCI from Siena, both players joining on loan deals for the rest of the season.

ANDREA DOSSENA left Liverpool for Napoli in a £3.3million deal, while Brazilian KEIRRISON joined Fiorentina on loan from Barcelona having spent the first half of the season at Benfica.

Germany midfielder THOMAS HITZLSPERGER, who was stripped of the Stuttgart captaincy last autumn, joined Lazio.

Werder Bremen's experienced midfielder TORSTEN FRINGS has been told by Germany coach Joachim Low that he will not be selected for the World Cup finals this summer. The 33-year-old has won 79 caps and is a veteran of two World Cups, finishing as a runner-up in 2002 and third in 2006.

Deportivo La Coruna's Brazilian wing-back FILIPE will miss the rest of the season after breaking his right ankle while scoring his side's opening goal in the 3-1 win over Athletic Bilbao. The injury was so bad that the club doctor originally feared they may have had to amputate part of the leg of the 24-year-old, who in the past has been linked with Barcelona and Real Madrid.

Former Scotland manager CRAIG BROWN took charge of Motherwell full-time, having been caretaker since December.

Gunner again...Campbell

Former England defender SOL CAMPBELL rejoined Arsenal until the end of the season. The 35-year-old – who was a free agent after having played just one game and been released by English fourth-tier side Notts County in September – won two Premier League titles, two FA Cups and scored in the 2006 Champions League Final defeat by Barcelona during the five years he previously spent with the Gunners.

Horrific...Filipe

Romanian coach GAVRIL BALINT signed a two-year deal to take charge of Moldova's national team. The 47-year-old replaces IGOR DOBROVOLSKI, who resigned in October, and he will be assisted by recently retired central defender ION TESTEMITANU, who was capped 56 times by Moldova.

ADEM LJAJIC, the Serb midfielder whose move from Partizan Belgrade to Manchester United collapsed when the Premier League side declined to take up their option on the 18-year-old, rejected a move to Russian champions Rubin Kazan and joined Fiorentina for £7million instead.

Fight...Sa Pinto

Sporting Lisbon director Ricardo SA PINTO, who made 177 appearances for the club during two spells, resigned following a fight with Sporting striker Liedson in the dressing room after the 4-3 win over third-tier Mafra in the Portuguese Cup.

Manchester United forward DIMITAR BERBATOV was voted Bulgarian player of the year for a record-breaking sixth time.

Portugal midfielder PEDRO MENDES left Scottish side Rangers to return to his homeland and join Sporting Lisbon.

PSV Eindhoven sacked Brazilian striker JONATHAN REIS for using banned substances and refusing to accept treatment. The 20-year-old had scored three goals in 12 league games this season and found the net a further four times in the Europa League.

Sacked...Reis

Standard Liege striker MILAN JOVANOVIC was named the Belgian league's Player of the Year.

A search has begun for Montenegro's second-ever national coach after ZORAN FILIPOVIC's contract expired. A replacemenmt was expected to be announced in time for the friendly with Macedonia on March 3.

Miron MARKEVICH was appointed Ukraine's new national team head coach. The 59-year-old succeeds OLEKSIY MYKHAYLYCHENKO, who resigned after Ukraine lost to Greece in the World Cup play-offs last November. YURLY KALIVINTSEV has been appointed Markevich's assistant.

Red Bulls boss...Backe

Werder Bremen terminated the contract of Serbian left-back DUSKO TOSIC after he reneged on an agreement to join German second division Duisburg on loan and attempted, unsuccessfully, to negotiate his own move to a Premier League club.

Former Southampton manager MARK WOTTE was appointed coach of Universitatea Craiova, with the four-times league champions just one point above the relegation zone following the winter break.

Former Birmingham City goalkeeper and manager GIL MERRICK died at the age of 88. The former England player led the club to a League Cup Final success against rivals Aston Villa in 1963.

AFRICA

Nigerian coach STEPHEN KESHI was sacked by Mali after their group-stage exit from the African Nations Cup. The Malian FA criticised the "barely professional behaviour of certain players and some of the backroom staff" and terminated the contracts of all the coaching staff.

AMERICAS

Brazilian coach JOEL SANTANA, who was sacked by the World Cup hosts South Africa in October, signed a one-year deal to take charge of Botafogo, who fired ESTEVAM SOARES after a 6-0 defeat by Vasco da Gama in a Rio de Janeiro state championship game.

Axed...Keshi

Boca Juniors' former Argentina goalkeeper ROBERTO ABBONDANZIERI announced that he will retire from all football at the end of the year. The 37-year-old has played over 200 games for Boca and has also had spells with Rosario Central and Getafe in Spain.

New York Red Bulls appointed HANS BACKE as head coach. The 57-year-old, whose previous post was manager at English fourth-tier side Notts County, was Sven Goran Eriksson's assistant when his fellow Swede was boss of Mexico's national side.

ASIA

Former Asian Player of the Year KHODADAD AZIZI took over as coach of Iranian club Esteghlal Ahvaz, who sacked MAJID BAGHERINIA after five consecutive league defeats.

Back home...Mahdavikia

After 11 years playing in Germany, former Iran captain MEHDI MAHDAVIKIA returned home, joining Steel Azin after cancelling his contract with Eintracht Frankfurt by mutual agreement. However, only days after Mahdavikia's arrival, coach HAMID ESTILI quit the club after complaining about the pressure on him to deliver Steel Azin's ambitious goals.

Retiring...Abbondanzieri

Together again...former Brazil and Real Madrid team-mates Ronaldo (left) and Roberto Carlos have been reunited at Corinthians

LIBERTADORES CUP Brazilians target continent's toughest-ever tournament

THE LIBERTADORES always used to be a slow burner. Up until a decade ago, the action began with 20 teams – 15 of which would then go through to join the cup holders in the knockout stages. In effect, this meant that the group phase was a phoney war that eliminated just five clubs.

Then, in 2000, the competition was expanded and ever – after a brief qualifying round – 32 teams enter the group phase, with half of them falling by the wayside.

However, this year, in the 51st version of the tournament, things are even more competitive than usual due to the residue left from the 2009 swine flu outbreak, whose epicentre was in Mexico. Two of that nation's sides, Guadalajara and San Luis, made it out of last year's group phase before running into problems. With the disease appearing to be worsening, and after much politicking and searching for alternate venues, the Mexican duo were banned from playing matches at home – and pulled out in protest, causing a serious rupture between the South American football confederation and the Mexican federation.

While Mexican clubs only participate in South America's premier club competition as guests, the television money that they bring with them is important, so a peace was agreed – with part of the formula being that Guadalajara and San Luis would be reinstated in the 2010 Libertadores, at the same stage where they withdrew last year.

So, with these two clubs already waiting in the knockout stages, this season there are only 14 places left for the 32 clubs who go into the group phase. The eight group winners will qualify, but only six of the runners-up will join them. As a result, the action is likely to be intense right from the outset because two bad results in the six group games could prove costly.

FAVOURITES

The easiest place to look for potential winners is in Brazil as, while it was not always the case, the Libertadores is now the top priority for all the country's teams. The clubs' marketing efforts are becoming increasingly professional and a strong currency means that players' wages are often much higher than in the rest of the continent. Brazil has provided seven of the last 10 finalists, though the trophy has gone elsewhere in each of the last three years.

The Brazilians have let themselves down in the Final recently, giving an impression that the occasion was too big for them. But if a lack of maturity was the problem before, it is one **Corinthians** have sought to solve.

Alone among the major Sao Paulo clubs in not having won the trophy, it has become an obsession that, in this the club's centenary year, they are going all out to rectify. Fans rioted after their last elimination, in 2006, and this year's side must withstand that sort of pressure. Hence the option for experience. To join Ronaldo, they have brought in Roberto Carlos (Fenerbahce) and Edu (Valencia) from Europe, and veterans Iarley (Goias) and Tcheco (Gremio) from elsewhere in Brazil. They look like being the team to beat.

National champions **Flamengo** also have high hopes, based on the forward pairing of Adriano and Vagner Love (on loan from CSKA Moscow), the playmaking of Dejan Petkovic and the all-round industry of Kleberson. Libertadores champions in 2006

Internacional from Porto Alegre have a strong squad, an excellent youth policy and have brought in experienced Uruguayan coach Jorge Fossati specifically to guide them through this competition. Then, for the seventh consecutive year, there is **Sao Paulo**, Brazil's most consistent team of recent times. This looks like being an interesting year for the club who no longer look as defensively impregnable as they were when they last won the Libertadores, in 2005, and coach Ricardo Gomes may need to tweak the pragmatic model that brought the club much success. However, if midfielder Hernanes can hit form they should not be discounted.

Providing they can cope with the extreme altitude – and get past Bolivia's Real Potosi in the qualifying round – **Cruzeiro** are also contenders. Last year's beaten finalists, they ended 2009 in magnificent style, charging all the way from the relegation zone of their national league to snatch the final Libertadores place on the last day of the season. Maintaining that form would make them a real threat and their presence confirms that this is the best Brazilian contingent in some time.

In Argentina, for the first time since 1983 and only the third time ever, there is no representation from the big five of Boca Juniors, River Plate, Racing, Independiente and San Lorenzo.

These are strange times for Argentinian football, with the last seven domestic titles going to seven different clubs. But, in an otherwise dreadful 2009 Libertadores for the nation's sides, **Estudiantes** found form at the right time to claim the title. But can Alejandro Sabella's men keep the momentum going? The skilful Jose Sosa has been brought back on loan from Bayern Munich to join the likes of Juan Sebastian Veron and Enzo Perez in a strong midfield, though it is clear that last year's goalkeeper Mariano Andujar, who was sold to Catania in Italy, has yet to be adequately replaced.

Argentina's best bet could be **Velez Sarsfield**, a well-run club with a fine youth policy. They have an international centre-back in Nicolas Otamendi, midfield inspiration from Maxi Moralez, a goal threat from Jonathan Cristaldo and Uruguayan partner Rodrigo Lopez, and, in Ricardo Gareca, a

Brazil has provided seven of the last 10 finalists, though the trophy has gone elsewhere in each of the last three years

Bravo...the Guadalajara striker's side have been given a bye to the knockout stages

Inspirational...all eyes will once again be on Veron (left) as holders Estudiantes defend their crown

coach with invaluable experience from all over the continent.

Another interesting side from Argentina are Roberto Sensini's **Newell's Old Boys**, who have a veteran defence, a promising midfield and a potent blend up front between the Paraguayan speedster Jorge Achucarro and Uruguayan centre-forward Joaquin Boghossian. First, though, they must get past Emelec of Ecuador in the qualifying round.

No Mexican side has won the Libertadores, though there have been a few near misses, and with a financial situation far superior to most South American clubs, they can never be discounted. Despite shaky domestic form last year, **Guadalajara** could be contenders as their all-Mexican squad has strength in depth, the club has considerable Libertadores experience – and they are already in the last 16. With Omar Bravo back to join Omar Arellano up front, they should be full of goals – though their away form could be a problem.

Mexican champions **Monterrey** are another side to watch, though they may struggle to replace Chilean marksman Humberto Suazo, who has been loaned to Real Zaragoza of Spain.

Struggle...Sebastian Fernandez (left) helped Banfield to a first-ever Argentinian title last year, but continental success may be beyond them

INTERESTING OUTSIDERS

Back in the competition for the third consecutive year, **Lanus** have one of the best youth policies in Argentina, but will surely suffer from the loss of striker Eduardo Salvio to Atletico Madrid. However, they have enough quality to make the quarter-finals, especially as their group looks quite straightforward. Argentinian apertura champions **Banfield** have a tougher group. They have also lost their star striker – Santiago Silva, who has returned to Velez Sarsfield – and will need all their recent durability to make the knockout stage. The other Argentinian club in the competition, **Colon**, face a tricky qualifying tie against Chile's Universidad Catolica.

Last year **Nacional** became the first Uruguayan club to reach the semi-finals in 20 years. Their young side was spearheaded by playmaker Nicolas Lodeiro, South America's revelation of 2009, but despite hopes of keeping the 20-year-old for one more campaign he has joined Dutch club Ajax. However, Nacional have brought in plenty of experience to compensate, signing ex-internationals such as centre-back Alejandro Lembo from Aris of Greece, and wide men Mario Regueiro, also from Aris, and Gustavo Varela from German club Schalke.

Another club to surpass themselves in 2009 were Venezuela's **Caracas**, who reached the quarter-finals for the first time. A well-run club under coach Noel Sanvicente, they have brought back international defenders Jose Manuel Rey from a loan spell with Chile's Colo Colo and Gabriel Cichero, who has made his loan from Red Bull New York permanent.

Already in the last 16, **San Luis** of Mexico have a much changed squad from last year, and on paper look stronger than the team that scraped into the 2009 knockout rounds. If they are to join them in the knock out stage, **Morelia** will need to get off to a good start in what looks like a well-balanced group.

Mexico has had a hand in the recent decline in performances from Paraguayan clubs in the Libertadores, snapping up the country's biggest talents. Paraguay's best bet this time would seem to be **Cerro Porteno**, who under Pedro Troglio have found a way round this problem by importing Argentinians – though local attacking midfielder Luis Caceres is the standout performer. They find themselves in a difficult group, along with **Independiente Medellin** who, under promising coach Leonel Alvarez, would seem to be Colombia's brightest hope. They will, however, surely struggle to replace top scorer Jackson Martinez, who was sold to Mexican side Jaguares.

Back on board...Cichero (top) and Rey of Caracas

Elsewhere, Chile's **Colo Colo**, competing for the eighth successive year, look full of goals, if somewhat vulnerable in defence. Peruvian champions **Universitario** came very close to making the knockout stage last year and impressive coach Juan Reynoso thinks that his squad is stronger this time round.

Surprisingly, 2008 Libertadores champions LDU of Ecuador failed to qualify, but neighbours **Deportivo Quito** will be present and might spring the odd surprise, especially if midfield star Michael Arroyo catches fire.

Meanwhile, no Bolivian club has made it out of the group stage since 2000, when **Bolivar** reached the quarter-finals. After missing out for a couple of years, they are now back in the competition and seemingly better organised. With a competent coach in Santiago Escobar, their group does not look impossible as few will relish the trip 3,600 metres up the Andes. Named after South America's supreme liberator, they may have their country's best chance in years of making an impression in the Libertadores.

Tim Vickery

● See page 106 for the Libertadores Cup group draw and schedule

ASIAN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

New-look holders seek repeat

WITH coach Sergio Farias having gone, and strike duo Denilson and Stevica Ristic now with Bunyodkor of Uzbekistan, new **Pohang Steelers** boss Waldemar Lemos has been forced to oversee a rapid rebuilding of the reigning Asian champions.

Al Ittihad – the side the South Koreans beat in last year's Final – are the only club to have won back-to-back titles, claiming the silverware in 2004 and 2005. But Pohang are hoping that an overhaul of their squad will allow them to emulate the Saudi Arabian club.

Headlining the new recruits is South Korea striker Seol Ki-hyeon, who has joined the club after failing to secure a regular starting place in the Premier League with Fulham.

With the World Cup on the horizon, Seol has returned home to play in the K-League for the first time in his career – he joined Royal Antwerp in Belgium straight from university in 2000 – and he has his sights set on steering Pohang to further continental glory.

"I have come back home after 10 years," says Seol. "I want to repay the fans' support by showing the advanced football skills I acquired while in Europe.

"I expect to contribute to the development of the K-League through the experience I gained in the Premier League."

Brazilian striker Mota, formerly of Seongnam Ilhwa, has also joined Pohang, as has Seoul defender Ahn Tae-eun, while another South Korea international, forward No Byung-jun, gave the club a boost by signing a new two-year contract.

Steeler...Pohang's No (right) escapes from Saud Khariri of Al Ittihad in last year's Final

"I want the players to play attacking football, with fair play and with respect for our opponents," says new coach Waldemar Lemos. "I want the players to realise their potential as a team and establish trust between myself and the players."

Pohang have been drawn with **Adelaide United**, runners-up in the 2008 edition of the competition, as well as China's **Shandong Luneng** – now coached by former Iran boss Branko Ivankovic – and Champions League first-timers **Sanfrecce Hiroshima** in Group H.

Al Ittihad, meanwhile, will launch their campaign in Group B alongside Iran's **Zob-Ahan**, **Bunyodkor** and an as yet undetermined winner of one of the competition's preliminary rounds.

The Jeddah giants enter the fray having ditched Gabriel Calderon, the Argentinian who steered the club to last year's Saudi league title and who was also in charge as they reached the Final last season in Tokyo.

Calderon has been replaced by Enzo Trossero, who coached Saudi rivals Al Shabab until leaving last year due to family commitments. "The period the club is going through is natural," says Trossero. "I hope that I can lead them to success."

Bunyodkor have continued their policy of signing up the best of Uzbekistan's talent with the capture of Alexander Kovalyov and Anzur Ismailov, from Metalourg Bekabad and Pakhtakor respectively, as Luiz Felipe Scolari attempts to steer the club beyond the quarter-final finish they achieved in 2009.

> Al Ittihad are the only club to have won back-to-back titles...but Pohang are hoping to emulate the Saudi Arabian club

Last four...Scolari has plans for Bunyodkor

Meanwhile, former Pohang coach Farias has pitched up at Saudi side **Al Ahli** and will hope to put the lessons he learned winning last year's title to good use against Qatar's **Al Gharafa**, Iranian champions **Esteghlal** and **Al Jazira** of the United Arab Emirates in Group A.

The Brazilian's departure from Pohang was originally supposed to be only temporary, with Farias and the club claiming the 42-year-old would take a year's leave of absence before possibly returning to the K-League, where he was the longest-serving foreign coach ever.

But he will now take Al Ahli into the competition as one of four clubs from Saudi Arabia represented in this year's tournament.

That number includes new Saudi Premier League champions **Al Hilal**, who have flourished under Belgian coach Eric Gerets – and the former PSV Eindhoven manager has declared his determination to take the Riyadh-based club into the last eight of the competition.

"We have two cup tournaments in Saudi Arabia (the King's Cup and Crown Prince's Cup) and we want to win one of them," said Gerets. "But of utmost importance is to reach the quarter-finals of the AFC Champions League."

Al Hilal, who twice won the now-defunct Asian Club Championship as well as the Asian Cup-winners Cup, should have few problems clinching a top-two finish in Group D against Qatar's **Al Sadd**, **Mes** of Iran and **Al Ahli** from the United Arab Emirates.

The remaining Saudi side, **Al Shabab**, are in Group C alongside Uzbekistan's **Pakhtakor**, **Al Ain** of the UAE and Iran's **Sepahan**.

The eastern half of the draw, as has been the case in recent seasons, looks the least predictable with Chinese champions **Beijing Guoan** drawn in Group E alongside former Asian champions **Seongnam Ilhwa**, Australia's **Melbourne Victory** and a **Kawasaki Frontale** side that recently signed Japan international Junichi Inamoto.

Reigning J.League champions **Kashima Antlers** meet 2006 winners **Chonbuk Motors**, China's **Changchun Yatai** and **Persipura Jayapura** from Indonesia in Group F, while Group G sees the 2008 champions **Gamba Osaka** pitted against **Henan Jianye**, **Suwon Bluewings** and an as yet unknown qualifier from the play-offs.

Michael Church

● **See page 108 for the Asian Champions League group schedule**

Export...Javadov

AZERBAIJAN

Biggest-ever transfer

Vagif Javadov's move from Karabakh to Dutch club Twente was hailed by federation secretary Elhan Mamedov as "the biggest transfer in our nation's football history".

The 20-year-old, who was the country's player of the year for 2009, starred in his side's Europa League run – which ended with a 3-1 aggregate defeat by Twente.

BELGIUM

Strugglers' new coach

Lokeren have parted company with coach Jacky Mathijssen, who collected just four points in 10 games after succeeding Aleksandar Jankovic in October. He was replaced by Emilio Ferrera, who stepped down at Greek side Panionios.

BULGARIA

All over for Botev?

Although the league does not resume until the start of March, bottom-of-the-table Botev Plovdiv could be thrown out of the top division after 16 players asked the Bulgarian Football Union (BFU) for free transfers because the country's oldest team failed to pay their wages.

BFU president Borislav Mihaylov claimed: "It's very possible Botev will disappear from the footballing map. If they fail to assure us they're able to meet their financial commitments, Botev will not participate in the second half of the championship."

Meanwhile, having had his resignation rejected in November, Luboslav Penev finally quit as CSKA Sofia coach just 24 hours before the team returned to training after

RESULTS

EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

1st knockout round draw

Bayern Munich (Ger) v Fiorentina (Ita)^
CSKA Moscow (Rus) v Sevilla (Spa)****
Internazionale (Ita) v Chelsea (Eng)****
Lyon (Fra) v Real Madrid (Spa)*
Milan (Ita) v Manchester United (Eng)*
Olympiakos (Gre) v Bordeaux (Fra)***
Porto (Por) v Arsenal (Eng)**
Stuttgart (Ger) v Barcelona (Spa)***
*1st leg - February 16; 2nd leg - March 10
**1st leg - February 17; 2nd leg - March 9
***1st leg - February 23; 2nd leg - March 17
****1st leg - February 24; 2nd leg - March 16

EUROPA LEAGUE

1st knockout round draw

Ajax (Hol) v Juventus (Ita)^
Athletic Bilbao (Spa) v Anderlecht (Bel)
Atletico Madrid (Spa)^ v Galatasaray (Tur)
Club Brugge (Bel) v Valencia (Spa)
Copenhagen (Den) v Marseille (Fra)^
Everton (Eng) v Sporting Lisbon (Por)*
Fulham (Eng) v Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr)
Hamburg (Ger) v PSV Eindhoven (Hol)
Hertha Berlin (Ger) v Benfica (Por)**
Lille (Fra) v Fenerbahce (Tur)
Liverpool (Eng)^ v Unirea Urziceni (Rom)^
Panathinaikos (Gre) v Roma (Ita)
Rubin Kazan (Rus)* v Hapoel Tel Aviv (Isr)
Standard Liege (Bel)^ v Salzburg (Aut)
Twente Enschede (Hol) v Werder Bremen (Ger)
Villarreal (Spa) v Wolfsburg (Ger)^

*1st legs - February 18; 2nd legs - February 25
*1st leg - February 16
**2nd leg - February 23
^entered from Champions League

2nd knockout round draw

Ajax OR Juventus v
Fulham OR Shakhtar Donetsk
Atletico Madrid OR Galatasaray v
Everton OR Sporting Lisbon
Club Brugge OR Valencia v
Twente Enschede OR Werder Bremen
Hamburg OR PSV Eindhoven v
Athletic Bilbao OR Anderlecht
Hertha Berlin OR Benfica v
Copenhagen OR Marseille
Lille OR Fenerbahce v
Liverpool OR Unirea Urziceni
Panathinaikos OR Roma v
Standard Liege OR Salzburg
Rubin Kazan OR Hapoel Tel Aviv v
Villarreal OR Wolfsburg

Ties to be played March 11-18

ALBANIA

ALBANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	19	15	3	1	37	15	48
Besa	19	10	8	3	19	8	38
FK Tirana	19	9	5	5	22	15	32
Shkumbini	19	8	3	8	23	21	27
Teuta	19	8	2	9	18	23	26
Apollonia	19	7	4	8	25	25	25
Laci	19	6	7	6	18	16	25
Kastrioti	19	7	4	8	18	19	25
Vlaznia	19	5	4	10	18	26	19
Flamurtari	19	4	6	9	15	23	18
Gramozi	19	4	6	9	12	22	18
Skenderbeu	19	3	6	10	17	27	15

Up to and including January 31 games

AUSTRIA

AUSTRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rapid	19	12	5	2	44	16	41
Salzburg	19	11	6	2	37	17	39
Austria Wien	19	11	3	5	33	23	36
Sturm	19	8	6	5	28	19	30
Ried	19	7	6	6	24	19	27
W Neustadt	19	7	3	9	33	36	24
Mattersburg	19	7	2	10	26	34	23
LASK	19	4	6	9	40	52	18
Kapfenberger	19	4	3	11	22	37	18
A Kärnten	19	1	4	14	14	46	7

League resumes weekend of February 13/14

BELGIUM

Jan 15: Gent 2 Kortrijk 2.
Jan 16: Roeselare 1 Mechelen 2; St Truiden 2 Lokeren 1; Charleroi 1 Genk 3.
Jan 17: Standard 0 Anderlecht 4; Germinal Beerschot 1 Cercle Brugge 4.
Jan 23: Zulte Waregem 2 St Truiden 0; Lokeren 1 Roeselare 4; Westerlo 0 Gent 0; Kortrijk 3 Germinal Beerschot 0.
Jan 24: Mechelen 0 Standard 0; Genk 2 Club Brugge 0.
Jan 29: Germinal Beerschot 0 Anderlecht 5.
Jan 30: Club Brugge 2 Westerlo 1; Mechelen 1 Cercle Brugge 2.
Jan 31: Gent 0 Zulte Waregem 2; Standard 3 Kortrijk 1.

BELGIUM

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Anderlecht	21	16	3	2	46	15	51
Club Brugge	21	14	3	4	40	25	45
Gent	23	12	5	6	43	26	41
Z Waregem	22	10	6	6	34	26	36
St Truiden	22	8	5	8	28	29	32
Germinal B	22	8	5	8	26	33	32
Standard	22	8	8	6	32	26	32
Kortrijk	22	8	7	7	27	25	31
Mechelen	22	8	2	11	29	39	29
Genk	21	6	8	7	26	23	26
Cercle Brugge	21	6	5	10	32	34	23
Westerlo	21	5	6	10	20	30	21
Charleroi	20	4	7	9	20	30	19
Roeselare	21	4	3	14	26	49	15
Lokeren	21	3	3	15	16	35	12

Mouscron withdrew from league because of financial problems; all results expunged

CYPRUS

Jan 8: APOP 1 Ermis 1; Apollon 3 Aris 0; Ethnikos 2 Omonia 1.
Jan 10: APEP 0 AEL 1; Doxa 2 AEP 2; APOEL 3 ENP 1.
Jan 11: Anorthosis 4 Nea Salamina 1.
Jan 16: AEL 0 Anorthosis 1; AEP 0 Ethnikos 0; Doxa 1 APOEL 2.
Jan 17: Aris 2 APOP 4; Omonia 4 APEP 3; Nea Salamina 0 Apollon 1.
Jan 23: Anorthosis 1 Omonia 3; ENP 1 Aris 0; APEP 3 AEP 3; APOP 2 Nea Salamina 1; APOEL 1 Ermis 0.
Jan 24: Apollon 0 AEL 2; Ethnikos 1 Doxa 0.
Jan 30: Omonia 2 Apollon 1; AEP 0 Anorthosis 2; Aris 2 Ermis 2.
Jan 31: Doxa 1 APEP 0; AEL 2 APOP 0.
Feb 1: Nea Salamina 0 ENP 0.

CYPRUS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
APOEL	18	13	4	1	35	13	43
Omonia	19	13	4	2	37	17	43
Anorthosis	19	13	3	3	32	15	42
Apollon	19	11	5	3	26	13	38
APOP	19	10	3	6	31	26	33
AEL	19	10	2	7	22	13	32
ENP	18	5	6	7	17	24	21
Doxa	19	5	5	9	19	27	20
AEP	19	4	7	8	18	26	19
Ethnikos	18	5	4	9	13	23	19
Ermis	18	4	6	8	22	24	18
Aris	19	3	5	11	21	36	14
APEP	19	3	4	12	20	35	13
Nea Salamina	19	0	6	13	13	36	6

CZECH REPUBLIC

CZECH REPUBLIC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Teplice	15	9	5	1	29	16	32
Sparta	16	8	8	0	19	7	32
Ostrava	16	9	4	3	23	15	31
Jablonec	16	9	4	3	17	12	31
Plzen	15	7	5	3	17	13	26
M Boleslav	16	7	4	5	28	21	25
Slavia	16	6	6	4	21	14	24
Pribram	16	7	2	7	17	17	23
Olomouc	16	6	4	6	27	17	22
Liberec	16	6	2	8	18	22	20
Bohemians 1905	16	4	5	7	9	13	17
Brno	16	4	5	7	13	22	17
C Budejovice	16	3	5	8	13	21	14
Slovacko	16	4	2	10	14	23	14
Kladno	16	3	2	11	12	27	11
Bohemians	16	3	1	12	15	32	10

League resumes weekend of February 27/28

DENMARK

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
OB	18	11	5	2	29	17	38
Copenhagen	18	11	4	3	31	11	37
Esbjerg	18	9	6	3	31	21	33
Silkeborg	18	8	5	5	30	20	29
Brondby	18	8	3	7	35	32	27
AGF	18	7	6	5	24	23	27
AaB	18	7	4	7	20	15	25
Nordsjaelland	18	7	2	9	21	24	23
Sonderjyske	18	6	4	8	15	18	22
Midtjylland	18	6	3	9	22	31	21
Randers	18	1	5	12	13	33	8
HB Koge	18	1	5	12	15	41	8

League resumes weekend of March 6/7

ENGLAND

Tuesday, January 5

Stoke 3 (Tuncay 12, Abdoulaye Faye 33, Sidibe 37)
Fulham 2 (Duff 61, Dempsey 85) Att: 25,104

Saturday, January 9

Arsenal 2 (Denilson 27, Rosicky 90)
Everton 2 (Osman 12, Pienaar 80) Att: 60,053

Birmingham 1 (Jerome 38)
Manchester United 1 (Dunn og 63) Att: 28,907

Monday, January 11

Manchester City 4 (Tevez 7, 49, 90, Richards 38)
Blackburn 1 (Gamst Pedersen 71) Att: 40,292

Saturday, January 16

Chelsea 7 (Anelka 8, 65, Malouda 17, A Cole 22, Lampard 34, 89, Ballack 52)
Sunderland 2 (Zenden 56, Bent 90) Att: 41,776

Everton 2 (Pienaar 36, Saha pen 45)
Manchester City 0 Att: 37,378

Manchester United 3 (Berbatov 64, Rooney 88, Giggs 90)
Burnley 0 Att: 75,126

Stoke 1 (Huth 89)
Liverpool 1 (Kyrgiakos 57) Att: 27,247

Tottenham 0
Hull 0 Att: 35,729

Wolverhampton 0
Wigan 2 (McCarthy 60, N'Zogbia 73) Att: 27,604

Sunday, January 17

Aston Villa 0
West Ham 0 Att: 35,846

Blackburn 2 (Samba 25, Nelsen 54)
Fulham 0 Att: 21,287

Bolton 0
Arsenal 2 (Fabregas 28, Merida 78) Att: 23,893

Wednesday, January 20

Arsenal 4 (Rosicky 43, Fabregas 52, Vermaelen 65, Arshavin 85)
Bolton 2 (Cahill 7, Taylor pen 28) Att: 59,064

Liverpool 2 (Kuijt 6, pen 90)
Tottenham 0 Att: 42,016

the winter break.

His replacement, Ioan Andone – who was sacked by United Arab Emirates champions Al Ahli six games into the season in November – has already been warned by CSKA chief executive Ventsislav Zhivkov that he "would have to win the league-and-cup double or face the sack".

CSKA currently trail league leaders Lovech by four points.

Reunited...Tevez (left)

50 years since Liverpool and Manchester United both failed to reach the FA Cup fourth round

ENGLAND

No Final day out for City and Tevez

Despite scoring three times against his former club, Carlos Tevez failed to help Manchester City reach their first Cup Final for 29 years.

City, who won the home leg of their League Cup semi-final against Manchester United were beaten 3-1 at Old Trafford and went out 4-3 on aggregate. United now face Aston Villa at Wembley on February 28.

Owen Coyle resigned as manager of Burnley to take over from Gary Megson as boss of fellow relegation battlers Bolton Wanderers.

Coyle's first victory in charge of his new club came against his former club, who had replaced him with Brian Laws – a manager sacked by relegation-threatened Championship side Sheffield Wednesday in December.

Saturday, January 23
Manchester United 4 (Rooney 8, 82, 86, 90)
Hull 0 Att: 73,933

Tuesday, January 26
Bolton 1 (Lee 34)
Burnley 0 Att: 23,986

Portsmouth 1 (Webber 75)
West Ham 1 (Upson 52) Att: 18,322

Tottenham 2 (Crouch 27, Bentley 59)
Fulham 0 Att: 35,467

Wolverhampton 0
Liverpool 0 Att: 28,763

Wednesday, January 27
Aston Villa 0
Arsenal 0 Att: 39,601

Blackburn 2 (Gamst Pedersen 20, Kalinic 76)
Wigan 1 (Caldwell 55) Att: 22,190

Chelsea 3 (Malouda 5, Lampard 31, 90)
Birmingham 0 Att: 41,293

Everton 2 (Cahill 7, Donovan 18)
Sunderland 0 Att: 32,163

Saturday, January 30
Birmingham 1 (Ridgewell 90)
Tottenham 1 (Defoe 69) Att: 27,238

Burnley 1 (S Fletcher 49)
Chelsea 2 (Anelka 27, Terry 83) Att: 21,131

Fulham 0
Aston Villa 2 (Agbonlahor 40, 43) Att: 25,408

Hull 2 (Venegoor of Hesselink 11, Hunt pen 52)
Wolverhampton 2 (Gardner og 48, Jarvis 67) Att: 24,957

Liverpool 2 (Kuijt 37, K Davies og 69)
Bolton 0 Att: 43,413

West Ham 0
Blackburn 0 Att: 33,093

Wigan 0
Everton 1 (Cahill 84) Att: 16,869

Sunday, January 31
Arsenal 1 (Vermaelen 79)
Manchester United 3 (Almunia og 33, Rooney 36, Park 52) Att: 60,091

Manchester City 2 (Adebayor 40, Kompany 45)
Portsmouth 0 Att: 44,015

Monday, February 1
Sunderland 0
Stoke 0 Att: 35,078

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chelsea	23	17	3	3	57	19	54
Man Utd	24	17	2	5	56	20	53
Arsenal	24	15	4	5	60	28	49
Tottenham	24	12	6	6	45	25	42
Liverpool	24	12	5	7	42	26	41
Man City	22	11	8	3	44	30	41
Aston Villa	23	11	7	5	31	18	40
Birmingham	23	9	7	7	22	23	34
Everton	23	8	8	7	33	34	32
Blackburn	24	7	7	10	25	40	28
Fulham	23	7	6	10	26	28	27
Stoke	22	6	8	8	19	26	26
Sunderland	23	6	6	11	30	40	24
Wigan	22	6	4	12	24	47	22
West Ham	23	4	9	10	29	38	21
Bolton	22	5	6	11	29	44	21
Wolves	23	5	6	12	19	40	21
Burnley	23	5	5	13	23	48	20
Hull	23	4	8	11	22	48	20
Portsmouth	22	4	3	15	19	35	15

LEADING GOALSCORERS

20 Wayne Rooney (Manchester United)
15 Jermain Defoe (Tottenham)
14 Darren Bent (Sunderland)
14 Didier Drogba (Chelsea)
12 Fernando Torres (Liverpool)
12 Carlos Tevez (Manchester City)

FA CUP – last 64

Jan 12: Bristol City 1 Cardiff 1.
Jan 18: Accrington 1 Gillingham 0; Brentford 0 Doncaster 1; Notts County 2 Forest Green 1.

Replays
Jan 12: Birmingham 1 Nottingham Forest 0; Coventry 1 Portsmouth 2 (aet); Derby 1 Millwall 1 (aet; Derby 5-3 on pens); QPR 2 Sheffield United 3.
Jan 13: Liverpool 1 Reading 2 (aet); Newcastle 3 Plymouth 0.
Jan 19: Cardiff 1 Bristol City 0.

Last 32

Jan 23: Accrington 1 Fulham 3; Aston Villa 3 Brighton 2; Bolton 2 Sheffield United 0; Cardiff 4 Leicester 2; Derby 1 Doncaster 0; Everton 1 Birmingham 2; Notts County 2 Wigan 2; Portsmouth 2 Sunderland 1; Preston 0 Chelsea 2; Reading 1 Burnley 0; Southampton 2 Ipswich 1; Tottenham 2 Leeds 2; West Bromwich 4 Newcastle 2; Wolverhampton 2 Crystal Palace 2.
Jan 24: Scunthorpe 2 Manchester City 4; Stoke 3 Arsenal 1.

FRANCE

Wednesday, January 13
Boulogne 0
Sochaux 0 Att: 11,681

Monaco 4 (Puygrenier 11, Haruna 55, 86, El Kaoutari og 87)
Montpellier 0 Att: 5,763

Saturday, January 16
Auxerre 0
Boulogne 0 Att: 10,127

Grenoble 1 (Varrault og 41)
Saint-Etienne 2 (Perrin 31, Riviere 40) Att: 13,677

Le Mans 0
Lorient 3 (Koscielny 22, Monterrubio 43, 53) Att: 8,015

ESM Team of the Month

European Sports Magazines JANUARY 2009

HOW IT WORKS

Every month, journalists from each member of the European Sports Magazines group vote for their first XI from Europe's top leagues. The players with the most votes make the overall team. For details of how ESM members voted this month, visit: **worldsoccer.com/esm11**

FRANCE

Bad three days for Lille

A surprise 2-1 defeat at Sochaux cost Lille second place in Ligue 1 and ended a club record-equalling run of seven straight victories.

To make matters worse, three days later they lost 10-9 on penalties in the French Cup to fourth-tier Colmar, who were reduced to 10 men after Cedric Faivre was sent off.

Sent off...Faivre (in green)

GEORGIA

Goal king to coach

Record-breaking striker Zurab Ionanidze has hung up his boots and taken up a coaching position with Zestafoni's reserve side.

The 38-year-old, who won four caps for his country, bows out as the only player to register a double century of Georgian league goals – with 216 goals in a league-record 422 appearances for Samurgali Tskhaltubo, Torpedo Kutaisi, Samtredia and Zestafoni. He also played in Russia with Zhemchuzhina-Sochi and Lokomotiv Nizhni Novgorod, and for Tavriya Simferopol in Ukraine.

GERMANY

Bye bye Bergmann

Andreas Bergmann's brief spell in charge of Hannover ended after a run of seven games without a win left the side third from bottom in the Bundesliga. Bergmann, who became the sixth Bundesliga coach to be sacked this season, was replaced by former Schalke boss Mirko Slomka.

GREECE

Home loss costs Zico

Champions for 12 of the last 13 seasons, Olympiakos suffered

Lille 3 (Obraniak 5, Balmont 52, Beria 66)
Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Erdinc 83) Att: 15,340

Monaco 2 (Nene 84, 90)
Sochaux 0 Att: 5,640

Montpellier 1 (Camara 58)
Nice 0 Att: 12,954

Nancy 0
Lyon 2 (Cris 79, Gonalons 86) Att: 16,097

Rennes 1 (Saw 55)
Lens 1 (Monnet-Paquet 65) Att: 21,187

Valenciennes 1 (Audel 44)
Toulouse 3 (Tabanou 16, 84, Sissoko 87) Att: 10,249

Sunday, January 17
Bordeaux 1 (Mandanda og 45)
Marseille 1 (Cheyrou 81) Att: 32,771

Tuesday, January 19
Saint-Etienne 0
Rennes 0 Att: 21,579

Wednesday, January 20
Boulogne 0
Valenciennes 2 (Bong 50, Ben Khalfallah 90) Att: 11,085

Grenoble 1 (Batilas 45)
Bordeaux 3 (Gouffran 53, Chamakh 56, Cavenaghi 83) Att: 13,336

Lens 0
Montpellier 1 (Montano 86) Att: 29,784

Lorient 1 (Ducasse 28)
Lyon 3 (Lopez 63, Kallstrom 71, 88) Att: 15,790

Marseille 2 (Niang 30, pen 55)
Le Mans 1 (Le Tallec 16) Att: 44,967

Nice 0
Auxerre 1 (Jelen 90) Att: 7,001

Paris Saint-Germain 0
Monaco 1 (Edel og 68) Att: 32,603

Sochaux 2 (Perquis 8, Dalmat 11)
Lille 1 (Wittek 76) Att: 10,321

Toulouse 0
Nancy 0 Att: 13,937

Saturday, January 30
Bordeaux 0
Boulogne 0 Att: 25,290

Le Mans 1 (Dualé 69)
Toulouse 3 (Machado 51, Cignac 62, Kazim-Richards 82) Att: 7,144

Lille 1 (Nazard 23)
Lens 0 Att: 16,458

Monaco 3 (Park 19, 60, Nene 62)
Nice 2 (Ben Saada 55, Digard 81) Att: 10,420

Montpellier 2 (Ali-Fana 49, Cheyrou og 77)
Marseille 0 Att: 29,051

Nancy 1 (Nadji 40)
Lorient 0 Att: 13,878

Rennes 4 (Danze 9, Marveaux 41, 46, Bangoura 57)
Grenoble 0 Att: 17,515

Sunday, January 31
Auxerre 1 (Mignot 78)
Saint-Etienne 0 Att: 11,670

Lyon 2 (Gomis 77, Cris 81)
Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Erdinc 10) Att: 34,157

Valenciennes 1 (Audel 21)
Sochaux 1 (Perquis 54) Att: 11,323

FRANCE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bordeaux	22	15	3	4	36	14	48
Montpellier	22	13	3	6	30	25	42
Lille	22	12	4	6	42	22	40
Lyon	22	11	6	5	38	28	39
Monaco	22	12	3	7	30	24	39
Auxerre	22	11	6	5	21	15	39
Marseille	21	10	6	5	33	24	36
Rennes	22	9	7	6	29	19	34
Lorient	22	9	5	8	33	26	32
Toulouse	22	9	5	8	25	18	32
Valenciennes	22	9	5	8	34	30	32
Nancy	22	8	2	10	27	31	26
Sochaux	21	9	3	9	20	25	30
PSG	22	8	5	9	33	34	29
Lens	22	7	6	9	20	27	27
Nice	22	6	4	12	22	37	22
Saint-Etienne	22	5	5	12	13	26	20
Le Mans	22	4	4	14	18	36	16
Boulogne	22	3	7	12	15	37	16
Grenoble	22	1	4	17	12	42	7

LEADING GOALSCORERS
13 Nene (Monaco)
11 Gervinho (Lille)
9 Mevlut Erdinc (Paris Saint-Germain)
9 Pierre-Alain Frau (Lille)
9 Lisandro Lopez (Lyon)
9 Mamadou Niang (Marseille)

FRENCH CUP – last 64

Jan 8: Pau 0 Evian TG 2.
Jan 9: AC Ajaccio 3 Cannes 0; Bordeaux 1 Rodez 0; Chaurey 0 Agen 1; Laval 1 Vesoul 2 (aet); Le Mans 1 Valenciennes 0; Les Herbiers 0 Toulouse 1; Monaco 0 Tours 0 (aet; Monaco 4-3 on pens); Rennes 2 Caen 0; Saint-Dizier 0 Raon-l'Etape 4; Sedan 1 Boulogne 4; Strasbourg 1 Lyon 3; Vannes 1 Troyes 1 (aet; Vannes 8-7 on pens).
Jan 10: Bonchamp 0 Guingamp 2; Lattes 0 Angers 1; Paris Saint-Germain 5 Aubervilliers 0; Ploërmel 2 Nice 1; Trélissac 0 Marseille 2; Versailles 0 Beauvais 3.
Jan 11: Amiens 0 Auxerre 1.
Jan 16: Avranches 0 Saumur 1 (aet); La Grande-Motte 0 Villefranche-sur-Saône 2; Quevilly 6 Saint-Quentin 0.
Jan 17: Marquette 1 Mulhouse 2.
Jan 23: Colmar 0 Lille 0 (aet; Colmar 10-9 on pens); Compiègne 0 Lens 1; Grenoble 3 Montpellier 2 (aet); Pontivy 0 Brest 1 (aet); Saint-Louis-Neuweg 0 Sochaux 1; Saint-Ouen-l'Aumone 0 Sedan 3.
Jan 24: Saint-Etienne 4 Lorient 1; Thiers 1 Nancy 1 (aet; Nancy 3-2 on pens).

Last 32

Jan 25: Saumur 0 Rennes 4.
Jan 26: Beauvais 3 Agen 0; Bordeaux 5 AC Ajaccio 1; Quevilly 1 Angers 0; Raon-l'Etape 0 Vesoul 1
Jan 24: Monaco 2 Lyon 1; Mulhouse 0 Guingamp 1; Paris Saint-Germain 3 Evian TG 1
Jan 26: Auxerre 1 Sedan 1 (aet; Auxerre 3-0 on pens); Vannes 4 Grenoble 3 (aet).
Jan 27: Colmar 1 Boulogne 2; Nancy 0 Ploërmel 2.

Still to play: Lens v Marseille; Sochaux v Le Mans; Toulouse v Brest; Villefranche-sur-Saone v St Etienne

GEORGIA

GEORGIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olimpi	18	14	3	1	42	12	45
Zestaponi	18	11	5	2	31	15	38
WIT Georgia	18	9	6	3	26	18	33
Dinamo	18	9	5	4	28	11	32
Spartaki	18	6	5	7	25	30	23
Samtredia	18	6	4	8	24	35	22
Sioni	18	3	8	7	12	25	17
Gagra	18	3	5	10	16	30	14
Baki	18	3	3	12	15	27	12
Lokomotiv	18	1	6	11	6	25	9

Standings at winter break

GERMANY

Friday, January 15
Bayern Munich 2 (Demichelis 35, Klose 86)
1899 Hoffenheim 0 Att: 69,000

Saturday, January 16
Bayer Leverkusen 4 (Kadlec 15, Barnetta 19, Kroos 30, Derdiyok 86)
Mainz 2 (Hoogland 8, Bungert 67) Att: 28,000

Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Russ 57)
Werder Bremen 0 Att: 45,800

Hamburg 2 (Jansen 7, Petric 55)
Freiburg 0 Att: 51,446

Hannover 0
Hertha Berlin 3 (Piszczek 30, Raffael 33, Gekas 80) Att: 28,712

Monchengladbach 1 (Backer 80)
Bochum 2 (Sestak 12, Dedic 36) Att: 36,245

Stuttgart 3 (Hilbert 28, Pogrebnyak 58, Gebhart 87)
Wolfsburg 1 (Dzeko 65) Att: 37,000

Sunday, January 17
Koln 2 (McKenna 82, Mohamad 88)
Borussia Dortmund 3 (Hummels 28, 45, Grosskreutz 90) Att: 50,000

Schalke 1 (Kuranyi 48)
Nurnberg 0 Att: 61,515

Friday, January 22
Freiburg 0
Stuttgart 1 (Marica 41) Att: 23,900

Saturday, January 23
Bochum 2 (Hashemian 82, Sestak 90)
Schalke 2 (Sanchez 5, Kuranyi 42) Att: 28,008

Borussia Dortmund 1 (Haeder Valdez 36)
Hamburg 0 Att: 80,552

Hertha Berlin 0
Monchengladbach 0 Att: 46,090

Mainz 1 (Schuerrle 4)
Hannover 0 Att: 19,300

Nurnberg 1 (Eigler 27)
Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Kohler 40) Att: 37,464

Werder Bremen 2 (Hunt 10, Hugo Almeida 75)
Bayern Munich 3 (Muller 25, Olic 35, Robben 78) Att: 39,100

Sunday, January 24
1899 Hoffenheim 0
Bayer Leverkusen 3 (Hyypia 11, Kroos 51, Barnetta 71) Att: 29,500

Wolfsburg 2 (Gerhardt 22, Ricardo Costa 59)
Koln 3 (Pezzoni 7, Freis 57, Chihi 74) Att: 27,471

Friday, January 29
Hamburg 1 (Trochowski 90)
Wolfsburg 1 (Dzeko 34) Att: 51,845

Saturday, January 30
Bayern Munich 3 (Van Buyten 58, Gomez 75, Robben 85)
Mainz 0 Att: 69,000

Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Chris 76)
Koln 2 (Maniche 58, Russ og 84) Att: 45,100

Hannover 1 (Stajner 65)
Nurnberg 3 (Bunjaku 30, 64, 69) Att: 26,722

Hertha Berlin 0
Bochum 0 Att: 38,127

Monchengladbach 4 (Reus 4, Colaitti 13, Bobadilla 18, 35)
Werder Bremen 3 (Ozil 26, Pizarro 40, Frings pen 85) Att: 47,458

Schalke 2 (Kuranyi 19, Schmitz 49)
1899 Hoffenheim 0 Att: 60,402

Sunday, January 31
Bayer Leverkusen 3 (Kiessling 36, Derdiyok 37, Hyypia 40)
Freiburg 1 (Bastians 66) Att: 26,000

Stuttgart 4 (Felipe Santana og 14, Kuzmanovic 77, Marica 86, Tasci 89)
Borussia Dortmund 1 (Barrios 55) Att: 42,000

GERMANY	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
B Leverkusen	20	12	8	0	45	16	44
Bayern	20	12	6	2	42	17	42
Schalke	20	12	5	3	31	15	41
B Dortmund	20	10	6	4	28	23	36
Hamburg	20	8	8	3	37	21	35
Werder	20	7	7	6	37	24	28
E Frankfurt	20	7	7	6	25	27	28
Mainz	20	7	6	7	24	29	27
Hoffenheim	20	7	4	9	27	24	25
Stuttgart	20	6	7	7	24	25	25
Wolfsburg	20	6	7	7	36	39	25
M'gladbach	20	7	4	9	29	34	25
Koln	20	6	6	8	17	21	24
Bochum	20	3	6	9	22	36	21
Freiburg	20	5	3	12	20	38	18
Hannover	20	4	5	11	22	34	17
Nurnberg	20	4	4	12	16	35	16
Hertha Berlin	20	2	5	13	16	39	11

LEADING GOALSCORERS
13 Stefan Kiessling (Bayer Leverkusen)
11 Kevin Kuranyi (Schalke)
10 Lucas Barrios (Borussia Dortmund)
9 Albert Bunjaku (Nurnberg)
9 Edin Dzeko (Wolfsburg)
9 Mario Gomez (Bayern Munich)

Problems at home...Zico

a rare home defeat when Ignacio Scocco scored twice as mid-table AEK came from behind to win 2-1.

The result cost coach Zico his job and he was replaced by Bozidar Bandovic, but another home reverse – against PAOK – leaves Olympiakos six points behind Panathinaikos.

At the other end of the table, Panthrakikos sacked Albert Cartier, who failed to win a single game since taking over when Ilie Dumitrescu was fired. Pavos Dermitzakis becomes the club's third coach of the campaign.

HOLLAND

PSV beaten at last

Feyenoord ended PSV Eindhoven's impressive 39-match unbeaten run in all competitions with a 3-0 win in the Dutch Cup quarter-finals. Karim El Ahmadi (two) and Giovanni van Bronckhorst were the scorers. PSV's last defeat was in March, when they lost 1-0 at Feyenoord.

ISRAEL

League Cup success

Beitar Jerusalem won the country's first piece of silverware of the season, beating Hapoel Ra'anana 1-0 in the League Cup Final with a goal from Idan Vered.

All over...PSV's Danko Lacovic

GREECE

Jan 6: Larisa 1 Asteras 0; Kavala 2 Levadiakos 2; Atromitos 0 Aris 3.
Jan 6: Iraklis 3 Panthraikos 1; Giannina 0 Xanthi 0; Panathinaikos 4 Ergotelis 1; Olympiakos 1 AEK 2; PAOK 1 Panionios 0.
Jan 8: Ergotelis 0 Panionios 0; Xanthi 1 Panathinaikos 2; Levadiakos 0 PAOK 2.
Jan 10: Asteras 1 Kavala 0; Olympiakos 2 Larisa 1; Panthrakikos 1 Giannina 2; Aris 4 Iraklis 2; AEK 3 Atromitos 3.
Jan 16: PAOK 1 Asteras 0; Iraklis 1 AEK 1; Xanthi 1 Ergotelis 0.
Jan 17: Atromitos 2 Larisa 1; Panionios 2 Levadiakos 2; Panathinaikos 2 Panthrakikos 0; Giannina 0 Aris 1; Kavala 0 Olympiakos 0.
Jan 23: Asteras 2 Panionios 0; Ergotelis 1 Levadiakos 0; Larisa 2 Iraklis 1.
Jan 24: Atromitos 2 Kavala 0; Panthrakikos 1 Xanthi 1; Aris 0 Panathinaikos 0; AEK 3 Giannina 1; Olympiakos 0 PAOK 1.
Jan 30: Iraklis 1 Kavala 0; Giannina 2 Larisa 0; PAOK 1 Atromitos 0.
Jan 31: Levadiakos 1 Asteras 0; Panthrakikos 3 Ergotelis 2; Xanthi 2 Aris 1; Panionios 0 Olympiakos 1; Panathinaikos 1 AEK 1.

GREECE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Panathinaikos	20	15	4	1	38	12	49
Olympiakos	20	13	4	3	29	11	43
PAOK	20	13	4	3	25	8	43
Aris	20	8	8	4	24	18	32
AEK	20	8	6	6	29	27	30
Asteras	20	8	5	7	20	17	29
Atromitos	20	7	5	8	25	24	26
Ergotelis	20	6	7	7	22	23	25
Xanthi	20	7	4	9	16	19	25
Kavala	20	6	6	8	17	18	24
Panionios	20	6	6	8	24	24	24
Iraklis	20	6	4	10	24	30	22
Giannina	20	5	6	9	19	29	21
Larisa	20	5	6	9	15	29	21
Levadiakos	20	5	4	11	16	30	19
Panthrakikos	20	1	3	16	13	43	6

HOLLAND

Jan 17: NEC 2 Vitesse 1; Utrecht 0 Twente 0; NAC 1 Ajax 1.
Jan 19: Roda JC 0 PSV 1.
Jan 20: Groningen 2 Heerenveen 0.
Jan 22: PSV 3 NEC 0.
Jan 23: Heracles 1 Vitesse 2; Roda JC 2 Utrecht 0; Heerenveen 4 Willem II 2; RKC 0 NAC 1.
Jan 24: Ajax 1 AZ 0; Groningen 0 Twente 0; VVV 1 Feyenoord 1; Sparta 0 Den Haag 0.
Jan 29: Willem II 2 RKC 1.
Jan 30: NEC 1 Sparta 0; NAC 2 VVV 0; AZ 0 Groningen 1; Den Haag 2 Heerenveen 1.
Jan 31: Feyenoord 1 Ajax 1; Twente 2 Roda JC 0; Utrecht 0 Heracles 0; Vitesse 0 PSV 0.

HOLLAND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSV	20	16	4	0	47	13	52
Twente	20	16	4	0	40	15	52
Ajax	20	13	4	3	56	17	43
Feyenoord	20	11	6	3	31	17	39
Heracles	20	10	3	7	27	26	33
Utrecht	20	8	8	4	23	18	32
NAC	20	8	5	7	28	29	29
AZ	20	9	1	10	32	23	28
Groningen	20	8	6	6	23	26	24
Vitesse	20	6	4	10	23	33	22
VVV	20	4	9	7	26	29	21
Roda JC	20	5	5	10	25	38	20
Heerenveen	20	6	2	12	22	36	20
NEC	20	4	7	9	22	35	19
Sparta	20	5	4	11	19	36	19
Den Haag	20	4	6	10	20	36	18
Willem II	20	5	2	13	24	39	17
RKC	20	4	0	16	17	39	12

ISRAEL

Jan 9: Maccabi Tel Aviv 1 Hapoel Petach Tikva 0; Ahi Nazareth 2 Bnei Yehuda 2; Ashdod 1 Hapoel Haifa 0; Maccabi Haifa 3 Ra'anana 0; Be'er Sheva 1 Ramat Gan 0; Maccabi Petach Tikva 0 Hapoel Tel Aviv 0.
Jan 10: Netanya 1 Acre 0.
Jan 11: Beitar 1 Bnei Sakhnin 0.
Jan 16: Beitar 1 Maccabi Petach Tikva 2; Ramat Gan 0 Maccabi Haifa 5; Ra'anana 1 Netanya 1; Acre 1 Ashdod 1; Hapoel Haifa 2 Ahi Nazareth 2; Bnei Yehuda 0 Maccabi Tel Aviv 1.
Jan 17: Hapoel Petach Tikva 0 Bnei Sakhnin 0.
Jan 18: Hapoel Tel Aviv 4 Be'er Sheva 1.
Jan 23: Hapoel Petach Tikva 0 Beitar 0; Bnei Sakhnin 2 Bnei Yehuda 0; Maccabi Tel Aviv 1 Hapoel Haifa 0; Ahi Nazareth 1 Acre 0; Ashdod 0 Ra'anana 0; Netanya 2 Ramat Gan 3.
Jan 24: Be'er Sheva 0 Maccabi Petach Tikva 1.
Jan 25: Maccabi Haifa 0 Hapoel Tel Aviv 0.
Jan 30: Beitar 1 Be'er Sheva 1; Ramat Gan 1 Ashdod 1; Acre 2 Maccabi Tel Aviv 3; Hapoel Haifa 0 Bnei Sakhnin 1; Bnei Yehuda 1 Hapoel Petach Tikva 1; Hapoel Tel Aviv 3 Netanya 3.
Jan 31: Ra'anana 1 Ahi Nazareth 1.
Feb 1: Maccabi Petach Tikva 0 Maccabi Haifa 1.

ISRAEL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Maccabi Haifa	20	18	1	1	44	8	55
H Tel Aviv	20	12	7	1	47	16	43
M Tel Aviv	20	12	5	3	34	18	41
Bnei Yehuda	20	8	6	6	25	20	30
Ashdod	20	7	9	4	18	17	30
Beitar	20	8	5	7	28	25	29
Netanya	20	7	6	7	27	23	27
Be'er Sheva	20	7	6	7	32	35	27
Hapoel Haifa	20	6	3	11	24	28	21
M Petach Tikva	20	5	6	9	20	26	21
Bnei Sakhnin	20	4	8	8	13	20	20
Ramat Gan	20	4	7	9	16	32	19
Ra'anana	20	3	8	9	20	35	17
H Petach Tikva	20	3	8	9	14	31	17
Ahi Nazareth	20	4	5	11	22	41	17
Acre	20	2	10	8	20	28	16

ITALY

Wednesday, January 6
Atalanta 0
Napoli 2 (Quagliarella 7, Pazienza 58) Att: 11,061

Bari 2 (Meggiorini 6, Barreto 68)
Udinese 0 Att: 17,828

Cagliari 2 (Lopez 90+1, Conti 90+3)
Roma 2 (Pizarro pen 52, Perrotta 65) Att: 15,000

Catania 1 (Spolli 81)
Bologna 0 Att: 13,057

Chievo 0
Inter 1 (Balotelli 12) Att: 25,579

Lazio 4 (Floccari 48, 54, Rocchi 72, Kolarov pen 90)
Livorno 1 (Bergvold 7) Att: 30,865

Milan 5 (Ronaldinho pen 32, Thiago Silva 38, Borriello 46, 60, Huntelaar pen 74)
Genoa 2 (Scuilli 25, Suazo 79) Att: 33,043

Parma 1 (Amoruso 25)
Juventus 2 (Salihamidzic 3, Castellini og 39) Att: 20,530

Sampdoria 1 (Cassano 41)
Palermo 1 (Cavani 40) Att: 21,540

Siena 1 (Maccarone pen 84)
Fiorentina 5 (Kroldrup 5, Santana 28, Gilardino 36, 66, Mutu 79) Att: 9,731

Saturday, January 9
Inter 4 (Milito 24, Sneijder 36, 68, Samuel 90)
Siena 3 (Maccarone 18, 65, Ekdal 37) Att: 53,000

Roma 1 (De Rossi 1)
Chievo 0 Att: 29,467

Sunday, January 10
Bologna 0
Cagliari 1 (Matri 66) Att: 14,000

Fiorentina 2 (Mutu 38, Castello 74)
Bari 1 (Barreto 25) Att: 25,972

Genoa 2 (Mesto 36, Scuilli 71)
Catania 0 Att: 24,776

Juventus 0
Milan 3 (Nesta 29, Ronaldinho 72, 88) Att: 24,165

Livorno 2 (Tavano 23, Lunardelli 62)
Parma 1 (Zaccardo 68) Att: 8,000

Napoli 1 (Denis 71)
Sampdoria 0 Att: 25,000

ESM
EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES
GOLDEN SHOE

UP TO AND INCLUDING JANUARY 31 GAMES

POS		TEAM	GOALS	FACTOR	PTS
1	Wayne Rooney	Manchester United (Eng)	20	2	40
2	Welliton	Spartak Moscow (Rus)	21	1.5	31.5
3	Jermain Defoe	Tottenham (Eng)	15	2	30
	Kristaps Grebis	Metalurgs Liepaja (Lat)	30	1	30
	Lionel Messi	Barcelona (Spa)	15	2	30
6	Kris Boyd	Rangers (Sco)	19	1.5	28.5
7	Darren Bent	Sunderland (Eng)	14	2	28
	Didier Drogba	Chelsea (Eng)	14	2	28
	David Villa	Valencia (Spa)	14	2	28
10	Vitali Gussev	Levadia Tallinn (Est)	27	1	27
	Luis Suarez	Ajax (Hol)	18	1.5	27
12	Antonio Di Natale	Udinese (Ita)	13	2	26
	Stefan Kiessling	Bayer Leverkusen (Ger)	13	2	26
	Diego Milito	Internazionale (Ita)	13	2	26
	Nene	Monaco (Fra)	13	2	26
16	Seydou Doumbia	Young Boys (Swi)	17	1.5	25.5
	Rade Prica	Rosenborg (Nor)	17	1.5	25.5
18	Aleksandr Bukharov	Rubin Kazan (Rus)	16	1.5	24
	Mame Diouf	Molde (Nor)	16	1.5	24
	Alejandro Domínguez	Rubin Kazan (Rus)	16	1.5	24
	Fernando Torres	Liverpool (Eng)	12	2	24
	Peter Kovacs	Odd Grenland (Nor)	16	1.5	24
	Carlos Tevez	Manchester City (Eng)	12	2	24
	Gary Twigg	Shamrock Rovers (Ire)	24	1	24

No way out...Cosmi

ITALY

President gets coach to change his mind

Serse Cosmi quit as coach of Livorno following their 2-0 home defeat by Napoli – only to be persuaded to change his mind three days later.

"The coach and the president [Aldo Spinelli] talked and there is now a mutual intent to improve the current squad," explained a club statement.

There was, however, no such reprieve for Atalanta coach Antonio Conte, whose side are fighting relegation.

Former Juventus captain Conte – who took over from Angelo Gregucci at Stadio Atleti Azzurri d'Italia in September after the team lost their first four Serie A games of the season – stuck by his resignation and was replaced by Bortolo Mutti.

MOLDOVA

Six and out

Belarusian coach Leonid Koutchouk left league leaders Sheriff by mutual consent during the winter break, despite being on course to lead the club to their seventh consecutive championship.

"I leave with pure heart and soul," said the 50-year-old. "I hope they continue what I have done here."

NORTHERN IRELAND

Brawl mars cup clash

The Irish Cup fifth-round tie between Newry City and Larne was abandoned after a mass brawl on the pitch.

Newry were leading 2-1 with eight minutes remaining, while two Larne players, Liam Hogan and Alan Reid, and the club's manager, Paul Millar, had already been sent off prior

Palermo 1 (Cavani pen 70)
Atalanta 0 Att: 20,000

Udinese 1 (Di Natale 27)
Lazio 1 (Floccari 16) Att: 14,000

Saturday, January 18

Bari 2 (Barreto pen 60, pen 63)
Inter 2 (Pandev 69, Milito pen 74) Att: 34,000

Cagliari 3 (Larrivey 3, 50, Jeda 64)
Livorno 0 Att: 12,000

Sunday, January 17

Atalanta 3 (Doni 5, 9, Padoin 35)
Lazio 0 Att: 10,000

Chievo 1 (Sardo 33)
Juventus 0 Att: 20,000

Fiorentina 1 (Mutu 51)
Bologna 2 (Gimenez 28, Di Vaio 45) Att: 25,000

Milan 4 (Ronaldinho pen 12, 72, 89, Borriello 28)
Siena 0 Att: 35,960

Napoli 0
Palermo 0 Att: 60,000

Parma 0
Udinese 0 Att: 14,918

Roma 3 (Perrotta 17, Toni 44, 60)
Genoa 0 Att: 31,746

Sampdoria 1 (Pazzini pen 45)
Catania 1 (Lemu 14) Att: 21,000

Wednesday, January 20

Bologna 2 (Di Vaio 19, 34)
Atalanta 2 (Manfredini 37, Chevanton 80) Att: 13,727

Genoa 1 (Milanetto 52)
Bari 1 (Barreto 4) Att: 24,863

Saturday, January 23

Catania 3 (Mascara 15, Martinez 71, Morimoto 77)
Parma 0 Att: 13,000

Juventus 1 (Del Piero 51)
Roma 2 (Totti pen 68, Riise 90) Att: 18,750

Sunday, January 24

Bologna 2 (Gimenez 54, 72)
Bari 1 (Barreto 38) Att: 17,969

Genoa 2 (Palacio 18, Crespo 42)
Atalanta 0 Att: 25,875

Inter 2 (Milito 10, Pandev 65)
Milan 0 Att: 80,018

Lazio 1 (Stendardo 18)
Chievo 1 (Pellissier 77) Att: 30,308

Livorno 0
Napoli 2 (Maggio 45, Cigarini 90) Att: 9,883

Palermo 3 (Hernandez 28, 37, Budan 58)
Fiorentina 0 Att: 21,585

Siena 1 (Calaio 78)
Cagliari 1 (Matri pen 80) Att: 10,057

Udinese 2 (Di Natale pen 7, Isla 44)
Sampdoria 3 (Pazzini pen 27, Pozzi 57, Semioli 66) Att: 16,167

Saturday, January 30

Bari 4 (Bonucci 5, Alvarez 7, Barreto pen 62, Romain 85)
Palermo 2 (Cavani 26, Pastore 54) Att: 20,000

Napoli 0
Genoa 0 Att: 16,000

Sunday, January 31

Cagliari 2 (Lazzari 36, Astori 48)
Fiorentina 2 (Marchionni 6, Jovetic 63) Att: 15,000

Catania 1 (Biagianti 80)
Udinese 1 (Fiore Flores 33) Att: 13,321

Chievo 1 (Pellissier 49)
Bologna 1 (Di Vaio 11) Att: 8,913

Juventus 1 (Del Piero pen 70)
Lazio 1 (Mauri 79) Att: 20,899

Milan 1 (Ambrosini 44)
Livorno 1 (Lucarelli 53) Att: 34,998

Roma 2 (Riise 29, Okaka 86)
Siena 1 (Vergassola 41) Att: 30,537

Sampdoria 2 (Palombo 36, Pazzini 45)
Atalanta 0 Att: 22,408

ITALY	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Inter	21	15	4	2	45	13	49
Milan	21	12	5	4	36	22	41
Roma	22	12	5	5	37	26	41
Napoli	22	10	8	4	31	24	38
Juventus	22	10	4	8	34	29	34
Palermo	22	9	7	6	29	25	34
Sampdoria	22	9	6	7	28	30	33
Cagliari	21	9	5	7	34	26	32
Bari	22	8	8	6	30	24	32
Genoa	22	9	5	8	35	36	32
Fiorentina	21	9	4	8	28	24	31
Chievo	22	8	5	9	23	23	29
Parma	21	8	5	8	24	29	29
Bologna	22	6	8	10	24	31	24
Lazio	22	4	10	8	17	23	22
Livorno	22	6	4	12	14	30	22
Udinese	21	5	6	10	23	28	21
Catania	22	4	8	10	22	30	20
Atalanta	22	4	5	13	20	34	17
Siena	22	3	4	15	23	44	13

LEADING GOALSCORERS

13 Antonio Di Natale (Udinese)
13 Diego Milito (Inter)
11 Paulo Barreto (Bari)
11 Giampaolo Pazzini (Sampdoria)
10 Alessandro Matri (Cagliari)
10 Francesco Totti (Roma)

ITALIAN CUP – last 16

Jan 16: Inter 1 Livorno 0.
Jan 12: Roma 3 Triestina 1.
Jan 13: Genoa 1 Catania 2; Juventus 3 Napoli 0; Milan 2 Novara 1.
Jan 14: Fiorentina 3 Chievo 2; Lazio 2 Palermo 0; Udinese 2 Lumezzane 0.

Quarter-finals

Jan 21: Fiorentina 3 Lazio 2.
Jan 26: Roma 1 Catania 0.
Jan 27: Milan 0 Udinese 1.
Jan 28: Inter 2 Juventus 1.

LUXEMBOURG

LUXEMBOURG	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jeunesse	16	10	5	1	26	8	35
Grevenmacher	16	9	2	5	32	22	29
Dudelange	16	8	5	3	26	17	29
Differdange	16	8	4	4	25	15	28
Hamm Benfica	16	7	6	3	32	18	27
Fola	16	7	5	4	28	23	26
Racing	16	7	4	5	30	27	25
Petange	16	7	1	8	26	25	22
Swift	16	5	4	7	19	23	19
Rumelange	16	5	1	10	16	36	16
Etzella	16	3	6	7	24	31	15
Progres	16	2	6	8	22	29	14
Kaerjeng	16	2	5	9	15	29	11
Mondercange	16	1	6	9	13	31	9

Standings at winter break

MALTA

MALTA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Valletta	16	10	4	2	35	15	34
Birkirkara	16	10	3	3	36	17	33
Qormi	16	10	2	4	33	20	32
Hibernians	16	7	5	4	29	25	26
Sliema	16	8	1	7	24	19	25
Tarxien	16	6	4	6	27	27	22
Hamrun	16	6	2	8	22	25	20
Floriana	16	5	5	6	19	30	20
Msida	16	3	2	11	9	28	11
Dingli	16	1	0	15	13	41	3

Up to and including February 1 game

MONTENEGRO

MONTENEGRO	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Buducnost	17	13	2	2	35	16	41
Rudar	17	13	2	2	26	9	41
Mogren	17	9	5	3	31	14	32
Grbalj	17	8	5	4	32	20	29
Lovcen	17	8	5	4	18	15	29
Zeta	17	8	2	7	21	20	26
Decic	17	3	7	7	11	17	16
Sutjeska	17	4	4	9	14	24	16
Berane	17	5	1	11	18	29	16
Mornar*	17	4	4	9	15	27	15
Petrovac	17	4	2	11	16	29	14
Kom	17	3	1	13	7	24	10

Standings at winter break
1pt deducted

NORTHERN IRELAND

NORTHERN IRELAND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cliftonville	23	13	4	6	45	29	43
Glentoran	25	12	7	6	40	31	43
Crusaders	26	13	4	9	37	37	43
Linfield	23	12	6	5	46	26	42
Dungannon	25	11	7	7	37	34	40
Coleraine	23	12	3	8	53	37	39
Portadown	23	8	7	8	45	29	31
Glenavon	24	8	6	10	33	43	30
Newry	25	7	6	12	26	44	27
Ballymena	24	8	2	14	29	37	26
Institute	22	4	8	10	19	31	20
Distillery	23	4	2	17	19	51	14

Up to and including January 30 games

POLAND

POLAND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wisla	17	13	1	3	31	13	40
Legia	17	10	5	2	22	7	35
Lech	17	9	5	3	27	16	32
Ruch	17	10	2	5	23	18	32
Belchatow	17	8	4	5	20	15	28
Lechia	17	7	5	5	16	15	26
Polonia B	17	6	6	5	20	18	24
Slask	17	6	5	6	19	17	23
Cracovia	17	5	5	7	13	20	20
Jagiellonia*	17	6	8	3	20	16	16
Piast	17	4	4	9	21	29	16
Arka	17	3	6	8	14	18	15
Korona	17	3	6	8	21	30	15
Polonia W	17	4	3	10	13	25	15
Zaglebie	17	3	5	9	12	26	14
Odra	17	3	2	12	13	28	11

League resumes Weekend of February 27/28
**10pts deducted for the club's involvement in a corruption scandal*

PORTUGAL

Jan 8: Sporting Braga 2 Nacional 0.
Jan 9: Maritimo 0 Guimaraes 1; Sporting Lisbon 1 Leixoes 0; Rio Ave 0 Benfica 1.
Jan 10: Olhanense 1 Pacos Ferreira 1; Academica 2 Naval 0; Porto 3 Uniao Leiria 2.
Jan 11: Belenenses 0 Setubal 0.
Jan 16: Olhanense 1 Naval 0; Guimaraes 2 Setubal 2; Porto 1 Pacos Ferreira 1; Sporting Lisbon 3 Nacional 2.
Jan 17: Belenenses 1 Leixoes 3; Rio Ave 0 Uniao Leiria 2; Academica 0 Sporting Braga 2; Maritimo 0 Benfica 5.
Jan 23: Sporting Braga 1 Sporting Lisbon 0.
Jan 30: Benfica 3 Guimaraes 1; Uniao Leiria 2 Olhanense 0; Nacional 0 Porto 4; Naval 1 Belenenses 0.
Jan 31: Pacos Ferreira 2 Academica 1; Setubal 2 Rio Ave 2.
Feb 1: Leixoes 1 Maritimo 2.

PORTUGAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
S Braga	17	13	3	1	24	6	42
Benfica	17	13	3	1	47	10	42
Porto	17	11	3	3	35	14	36
Sporting L	17	7	6	4	19	14	27
Uniao Leiria	17	7	5	5	23	16	26
Nacional	17	7	3	7	24	33	24
Guimaraes	17	6	5	6	17	20	23
Maritimo	17	6	4	7	23	26	22
Rio Ave	17	4	8	5	15	16	20
P Ferreira	17	4	7	6	16	18	19
Naval	17	5	3	9	10	20	18
Academica	17	4	4	9	21	27	16
Setubal	17	3	5	9	11	31	14
Olhanense	17	2	8	7	13	24	14
Leixoes	17	3	5	9	17	29	14
Belenenses	17	1	8	8	6	21	11

Change of Hearts...Jefferies

to what have been described as "the worst scenes in 40 years of Irish league football".

SCOTLAND

Time for a change

Jim Jefferies, the Scottish Premier League's longest-serving boss, left Kilmarnock and joined Hearts.

He was replaced by former Aberdeen manager Jimmy Calderwood.

SPAIN

Ronaldo sees red again

Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo received his marching orders for the second time in less than two months when he swung an elbow and broke the nose of Malaga defender Patrick Mtiliga.

Ronaldo – who was also sent off against Almeria in December after picking up two late bookings – had earlier scored both goals in a 2-0 win.

Jose Angel Ziganda – who led Xerez to just one win in their opening 17 league fixtures – was replaced by former River Plate boss Nestor Gorosito, who oversaw the club's second league victory of the season, against Mallorca.

Ernesto Valverde was sacked by Villarreal following the 2-0 home loss to Osasuna. Juan Carlos Garrido takes over until the end of the season.

On his way...Ronaldo

ROMANIA

ROMANIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CFR	17	10	4	3	23	10	34
Urziceni	17	10	4	3	25	13	34
Steaua	17	10	4	3	25	14	34
Timisoara	17	8	7	2	29	12	31
Rapid	17	9	4	4	36	21	31
Vaslui	17	8	3	5	25	19	30
Brasov	17	7	6	4	19	11	27
Dinamo	17	7	6	4	18	12	27
Otelul	17	6	4	7	21	24	22
Gaz Metan	17	5	6	6	18	26	21
Pandurii	17	5	5	7	14	17	20
Arges	17	4	6	7	19	23	18
Politehnica	17	5	3	9	15	25	18
Universitatea	17	5	2	10	24	27	17
International	17	5	1	11	16	31	16
Alba Iulia	17	3	5	9	17	27	14
Gloria	17	2	8	7	13	24	14
Cozmin	17	2	4	11	13	35	10

League resumes weekend of February 13/14

SCOTLAND

Jan 12: St Mirren 1 Aberdeen 0.
Jan 13: Hamilton 0 Dundee United 1.
Jan 16: Celtic 1 Falkirk 1; Dundee United 1 Hibernian 0; Hamilton 0 Rangers 1; Hearts 1 St Mirren 0; Kilmarnock 0 Motherwell 3.
Jan 23: Aberdeen 1 Kilmarnock 0; Hibernian 5 Hamilton 1; Motherwell 2 St Mirren 0; Rangers 1 Hearts 1.
Jan 24: Falkirk 1 Dundee United 4; St Johnstone 1 Celtic 4.
Jan 26: Hamilton 0 Kilmarnock 0.
Jan 27: Celtic 1 Hibernian 2; Dundee United 3 St Johnstone 3; Falkirk 0 Motherwell 0; Hearts 0 Aberdeen 3; St Mirren 0 Rangers 2.
Jan 30: Aberdeen 0 Motherwell 3; Hamilton 0 Celtic 1; Hibernian 2 St Mirren 1; Kilmarnock 4 Dundee United 4; Rangers 3 Falkirk 0; St Johnstone 1 Hearts 0.

SCOTLAND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	23	16	6	1	54	14	54
Celtic	22	13	5	4	44	23	44
Hibernian	22	12	6	4	35	19	42
Dundee Utd	23	10	9	4	35	31	39
Motherwell	22	7	9	6	29	29	30
Hearts	23	7	7	9	20	25	28
Aberdeen	21	7	6	8	17	22	27
St Johnstone	20	6	5	9	28	37	23
St Mirren	22	5	5	12	21	32	20
Hamilton	21	4	5	12	16	34	17
Kilmarnock	22	3	7	12	16	31	16
Falkirk	21	2	8	11	16	35	14

SERBIA

SERBIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Red Star	15	13	1	1	29	6	40
Partizan	15	11	4	0	31	10	37
Vojvodina	15	7	3	5	21	10	24
OFK	15	7	3	5	17	13	24
Spartak	15	6	5	4	19	13	23
Jagodina	15	6	3	6	18	16	21
Javor	15	4	7	4	11	12	19
Sloboda	15	5	4	6	15	18	19
Borac	15	6	1	8	13	19	19
Hajduk	15	4	5	6	16	16	17
Napredak	15	4	4	7	14	19	16
BSK	15	4	4	7	11	18	16
Mladi Radnik	15	3	7	5	10	18	16
Rad	15	3	6	6	14	19	15
Metalac	15	4	3	8	8	19	15
Cukaricki	15	2	2	11	10	27	8

League resumes weekend of February 27/28

SLOVAKIA

SLOVAKIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zilina	19	13	2	4	37	9	41
Slovan	19	12	4	3	30	14	40
Dukla	19	11	6	2	28	13	39
Nitra	19	8	4	7	21	17	28
Senica	19	7	5	7	16	23	26
Spartak	18	7	4	8	27	23	25
Tatran	19	7	3	9	17	18	24
Ruzomberok	19	6	5	8	18	23	23
Petrzalka	19	6	4	9	22	23	22
DAC	18	5	7	7	18	21	22
Dubnica	19	4	5	10	13	26	17
Kosice	19	2	3	14	15	42	9

League resumes weekend of February 27/28

SPAIN

Saturday, January 9
Sevilla 1 (Romaric 62)
Racing Santander 2 (Canales 26, 38) Att: 40,000

Valladolid 0
Atletico Madrid 4 (Jurado 16, Forlan 32, Reyes 59, Aguero 90) Att: 16,200

Villarreal 1 (Nilmar 40)
Almeria 1 (Corona pen 67) Att: 18,000

Sunday, January 10
Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Juan Rodriguez 49)
Osasuna 0 Att: 12,000

Espanyol 2 (Verdu 13, Marques 71)
Zaragoza 1 (Arizmendi 40) Att: 24,025

Malaga 1 (Weligton 48)
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Llorente pen 79) Att: 15,000

Real Madrid 2 (Higuain 6, Granero 50)
Mallorca 0 Att: 57,000

Sporting Gijon 1 (Diego Castro 39)
Getafe 0 Att: 22,500

Tenerife 0
Barcelona 5 (Messi 36, 45, 75, Puyol 44, Luna og 85) Att: 22,510

Xerez 1 (Carlos Calvo 25)
Valencia 3 (Mata 11, Silva 33, Marchena 69) Att: 12,000

Saturday, January 16
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Llorente 3)
Real Madrid 0 Att: 40,000

Barcelona 4 (Escude og 49, Pedro 70, Messi 85, 90)
Sevilla 0 Att: 63,274

Osasuna 2 (Juanfran 7, Pandiani 9)
Espanyol 0 Att: 16,926

Sunday, January 17
Almeria 1 (Goitom 61)
Tenerife 1 (Juanlu 2) Att: 17,732

Atletico Madrid 3 (Forlan 13, Paulo Assuncao 53, Balde 66)
Sporting Gijon 2 (Diego Castro pen 34, Luis Moran 90) Att: 50,000

Malaga 1 (Baha 84)
Getafe 0 Att: 20,000

Mallorca 2 (Mario Suarez 46, Castro 53)
Deportivo La Coruna 0 Att: 15,000

Racing Santander 1 (Canales 60)
Valladolid 1 (Pinillos og 18) Att: 16,402

Valencia 4 (Banega 6, Villa pen 28, 90, Silva 56)
Villarreal 1 (Nilmar 61) Att: 40,000

Zaragoza 0
Xerez 0 Att: 23,000

Saturday, January 23
Deportivo La Coruna 3 (Filipe 49, Juca 59, Pablo Alvarez 88)
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Colotto og 80) Att: 13,000

Sevilla 1 (Negredo 9)
Almeria 0 Att: 32,000

Valladolid 0
Barcelona 3 (Xavi 26, Daniel Alves 22, Messi 56) Att: 25,000

Sunday, January 24
Espanyol 1 (Osvaldo 49)
Mallorca 1 (Borja Valero pen 80) Att: 26,210

Getafe 1 (Manu 38)
Atletico Madrid 0 Att: 14,000

Real Madrid 2 (Cristiano Ronaldo 35, 39)
Malaga 0 Att: 65,000

Sporting Gijon 0
Racing Santander 1 (Geijo 44) Att: 23,500

Tenerife 0
Valencia 0 Att: 21,366

Villarreal 4 (Capdevila 3, Nilmar 19, Rossi 25, Ibagaza 87)
Zaragoza 2 (Eliseu 75, Lafita 82) Att: 17,000

Xerez 1 (Bermejo 22)
Osasuna 2 (Monreal 9, Camunas 83) Att: 14,909

Saturday, January 30
Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Riki pen 86)
Real Madrid 3 (Granero 13, Benzema 40, 90) Att: 30,000

Espanyol 1 (Luis Garcia 58)
Athletic Bilbao 0 Att: 25,110

Sporting Gijon 0
Barcelona 1 (Pedro 30) Att: 24,500

Sunday, January 31
Atletico Madrid 0
Malaga 2 (Duda 3, Javi Lopez 70) Att: 40,000

Getafe 0
Racing Santander 0 Att: 10,000

Sevilla 2 (Negredo 21, 69)
Valencia 1 (Navarro 90) Att: 42,000

Tenerife 1 (Juanlu 46)
Zaragoza 3 (Suazo 76, Adrian Colunga 79, Lafita 82) Att: 19,198

Valladolid 1 (Arze 80)
Almeria 1 (Crusat 12) Att: 14,700

Villarreal 0
Osasuna 2 (Juanfran 15, 85) Att: 17,000

Xerez 2 (Carlos Calvo 52, 78)
Mallorca 1 (Webo 23) Att: 14,764

SPAIN	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	20	16	4	0	50	10	52
Real Madrid	20	15	2	3	47	15	47
Valencia	20	11	6	3	36	20	39
Sevilla	20	11	3	6	31	22	36
Mallorca	20	10	4	6	34	23	34
Dep Coruna	20	10	4	6	24	22	34
Getafe	20	10	1	9	27	24	31
Ath Bilbao	20	9	3	8	24	25	30
Villarreal	20	7	5	8	31	29	26
Osasuna	20	7	5	8	20	21	26
Sporting Gijon	20	6	6	8	20	22	24
R Santander	20	6	6	8	23	27	24
At Madrid	20	8	5	9	30	33	23
Espanyol	20	6	5	9	14	26	23
Malaga	20	4	8	8	23	26	20
Almeria	20	4	7	9	19	30	19
Valladolid	20	3	9	8	24	36	18
Zaragoza	20	4	5	11	23	42	17
Tenerife	20	4	5	11	17	39	17
Xerez	20	2	5	13	16	35	11

LEADING GOALSCORERS

15	Lionel Messi (Barcelona)
14	David Villa (Valencia)
11	Gonzalo Higuain (Real Madrid)
11	Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Barcelona)
10	Roberto Soldado (Getafe)
9	Cristiano Ronaldo (Real Madrid)

SPANISH CUP – last 16

1st legs - January 5-7; 2nd legs - January 12-14
Alcorcon v Racing Santander 2-3, 0-0 (agg 2-3)
Barcelona v Sevilla 1-2, 1-0 (agg 2-2; Sevilla on away goals)
Celta Vigo v Villarreal 1-1, 1-0 (agg 2-1)
Hercules v Osasuna 2-1, 0-1 (agg 2-2; Osasuna on away goals)
Malaga v Getafe 2-1, 1-5 (agg 3-6)
Rayo Vallecano v Mallorca 2-1, 1-3 (agg 3-4)
Recreativo v Atletico Madrid 3-0, 1-5 (agg 4-5)
Valencia v Deportivo La Coruna 1-2, 2-2 (agg 3-4)

Quarter-finals

1st legs - January 20/21; 2nd legs - January 27/28
Atletico Madrid v Celta Vigo 1-1, 1-0 (agg 2-1)
Deportivo La Coruna v Sevilla 0-3, 1-0 (agg 1-3)
Mallorca v Getafe 1-2, 1-0 (agg 2-2; Getafe on away goals)
Racing Santander v Osasuna 2-1, 3-0 (agg 5-1)

Off to a flier...Banfield (in green)

ARGENTINA

Impressive start

Apertura winners Banfield began the clausura with a 1-0 win at River Plate, thanks to a Sebastian Fernandez goal.

Meanwhile, Mauro Boselli scored twice as Sudamericana Cup winners Estudiantes beat Arsenal 3-0, and Lanus came from two behind with a quarter of an hour remaining to beat Huracan 3-2.

BRAZIL

Dodo's great return

Former international striker Dodo scored a hat-trick in the opening 35 minutes as Vasco da Gama beat Botafogo 6-0 in the Rio de Janeiro state championship. It was only the 35-year-old's third game back following his two-year ban after he tested positive for a banned substance.

Another Brazil striker, Adriano, also grabbed a hat-trick to give national champions Flamengo a 5-3 win over Fluminense in a spectacular Rio de Janeiro state championship derby.

Roberto Carlos was sent off after just nine minutes against Palmeiras as Corinthians won 1-0 in the Sao Paulo state championship.

Elsewhere, Goias sacked coach Helio Dos Anjos and replaced him with Jorginho,

Still going strong...Dodo

SWITZERLAND

SWITZERLAND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Young Boys	18	13	2	3	43	20	41
Basle	18	10	4	4	41	27	34
Lucerne	18	8	5	5	33	26	29
Kriens	18	7	5	6	34	25	26
Grasshopper	18	8	2	8	31	24	26
Sion	18	7	5	6	29	31	26
Zurich	18	6	5	7	31	29	23
St Gallen	18	6	5	7	28	26	23
Bellinzona	18	4	3	11	25	51	15
Aarau	18	1	4	13	11	45	7

League due to resume weekend of February 6/7

TURKEY

Jan 22: Fenerbahce 3 Denizlispor 1.
Jan 23: Ankaraspor 0 Antalyaspor 3 (awarded); Eskisehirspor 1 Manisaspor 0.
Jan 24: Ankaragucu 0 Diyarbakirspor 0; Galatasaray 1 Gaziantepspor 0; Kayserispor 1 Genclerbirligi 1; Trabzonspor 3 Sivasspor 1.
Jan 28: Antalyaspor 0 Besiktas 1.
Jan 30: Istanbul BB 4 Kasimpasa 2; Diyarbakirspor 1 Trabzonspor 2.
Jan 31: Manisaspor 0 Ankaragucu 0; Bursaspor 3 Eskisehirspor 1; Genclerbirligi 3 Ankaraspor 0 (awarded); Gaziantepspor 0 Kayserispor 1; Denizlispor 1 Galatasaray 2; Sivasspor 1 Fenerbahce 5.

TURKEY	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fenerbahce	19	14	1	4	39	19	43
Galatasaray	19	13	3	3	39	22	42
Bursaspor	18	12	2	4	37	18	38
Kayserispor	19	11	5	3	30	14	38
Besiktas	18	10	5	3	21	10	35
Trabzonspor	19	10	3	6	35	23	33
Genclerbirligi	19	8	6	5	27	18	30
Istanbul BB	18	8	5	5	25	27	29
Eskisehirspor	19	7	7	5	23	19	28
Antalyaspor	19	8	3	8	27	22	27
Gaziantepspor	19	6	6	7	22	22	24
Kasimpasa	18	5	5	8	26	32	20
Ankaragucu	19	4	7	8	22	25	19
Manisaspor	19	4	7	8	16	20	19
Diyarbakirspor	19	4	7	8	18	27	19
Sivasspor	19	5	2	12	23	37	17
Denizlispor	19	1	4	14	13	33	7
Ankaraspor	19	0	0	19	0	57	0

Ankaraspor expelled from league for having "anti-competitive" links with Ankaragucu; all fixtures awarded as 3-0 wins to their opponents

UKRAINE

UKRAINE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dynamo	16	13	3	0	38	9	42
Shakhtar	17	12	4	1	40	14	40
Metalist	16	11	2	3	21	9	35
Dnipro	16	8	4	4	25	14	28
Metalurh D	16	8	3	5	25	17	27
Tavriya	16	7	5	4	20	22	26
Karpaty	16	6	6	4	25	21	24
Obolon	16	7	0	9	18	26	21
Arsenal	16	5	5	6	22	22	20
Vorskla	16	4	7	5	17	15	19
Illichivets	16	5	3	8	18	26	18
Metalurh Z	17	4	4	9	18	29	16
Zorya	16	4	3	9	12	26	15
Chernomorets	16	0	3	10	9	33	12
Zakarpattya	16	3	1	12	11	28	10
Kryvbas	16	2	1	13	15	32	7

League resumes weekend of February 27/28

WALES

WALES	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
TNS	18	13	5	1	42	6	44
Llanelli	18	13	3	2	47	16	42
Rhyl	21	11	6	4	44	24	39
Aberystwyth	21	11	4	6	31	26	37
Port Talbot	18	10	4	4	28	15	34
Neath	18	9	7	2	29	20	34
Prestatyn	20	9	5	6	33	31	32
Bala	20	8	4	7	32	25	31
Bangor	19	9	3	7	40	30	30
Airbus UK	18	6	7	5	31	20	25
Carmarthen	18	7	4	7	25	22	25
Haverfordwest	19	6	6	7	22	23	24
Newtown	16	4	5	7	25	29	17
Connah's Quay	17	4	4	9	14	31	16
Welshpool	19	3	3	13	14	39	12
Porthmadog	19	2	4	13	11	36	10
Cefn Druids	18	1	4	14	10	36	7
Caersws	17	1	2	14	16	52	5

Up to and including January 30 games

SOUTH AMERICA

LIBERTADORES CUP

Preliminary round

1st legs - January 26-28
Deportivo Tachira (Ven) 1 Libertad (Par) 0 (game 1)
Juan Aurich (Per) 2 Estudiantes Tecos (Mex) 0 (game 2)
Colon (Arg) 3 Univ Catolica (Chi) 2 (game 3)
Real Potosi (Bol) 1 Cruzeiro (Bra) 1 (game 4)
Newell's Old Boys (Arg) 0 Emelec (Ecu) 0 (game 5)
Atletico Junior (Col) 2 Racing (Uru) 2 (game 6)

2nd legs - February 2-10

Winners qualify for group stage

Group stage draw & schedule

Group 1
Cerro Porteno (Par)
Corinthians (Bra)
Independiente Medellin (Col)
Winners of preliminary round game 6

Feb 11 Cerro Porteno-Indep Medellin
Feb 24 Corinthians-*Game 6 winners*
Mar 9 *Game 6 winners*-Cerro Porteno
Mar 10 Indep Medellin-Corinthians
Mar 17 Cerro Porteno-Corinthians
Mar 18 Indep Medellin-*Game 6 winners*
Mar 25 *Game 6 winners*-Indep Medellin
Apr 1 Corinthians-Cerro Porteno
Apr 8 Indep Medellin-Cerro Porteno
Apr 14 *Game 6 winners*-Corinthians
Apr 22 Cerro Porteno-*Game 6 winners*
Apr 22 Corinthians-Indep Medellin

Group 2
Monterrey (Mex)
National (Par)
Once Caldas (Col)
Sao Paulo (Bra)

Feb 9 National-Once Caldas
Feb 10 Sao Paulo-Monterrey
Feb 24 Monterrey-National
Feb 25 Once Caldas-Sao Paulo
Mar 10 Once Caldas-Monterrey
Mar 11 National-Sao Paulo
Mar 17 Monterrey-Once Caldas
Mar 18 Sao Paulo-National
Mar 31 Monterrey-Sao Paulo
Apr 1 Once Caldas-National
Apr 21 National-Monterrey
Apr 21 Sao Paulo-Once Caldas

Group 3
Alianza Lima (Per)
Bolivar (Bol)
Estudiantes (Arg)
Winners of preliminary round game 2

Feb 10 Bolivar-Alianza Lima
Feb 11 Estudiantes-*Game 2 winners*
Feb 18 Alianza Lima-Estudiantes
Feb 24 *Game 2 winners*-Bolivar
Mar 9 Bolivar-Estudiantes
Mar 10 Alianza Lima-*Game 2 winners*
Mar 16 *Game 2 winners*-Alianza Lima
Mar 23 Estudiantes-Bolivar
Mar 30 *Game 2 winners*-Estudiantes
Apr 8 Alianza Lima-Bolivar
Apr 20 Bolivar-*Game 2 winners*
Apr 20 Estudiantes-Alianza Lima

Group 4
Blooming (Bol)
Lanus (Arg)
Universitario (Per)
Winners of preliminary round game 1

Feb 9 Lanus-*Game 1 winners*
Feb 11 Blooming-Universitario
Feb 18 *Game 1 winners*-Blooming
Feb 17 Universitario-Lanus
Feb 25 Blooming-Lanus
Feb 25 Universitario-*Game 1 winners*
Mar 23 *Game 1 winners*-Universitario
Mar 24 Lanus-Blooming
Mar 30 *Game 1 winners*-Lanus
Apr 6 Universitario-Blooming
Apr 15 Blooming-*Game 1 winners*
Apr 15 Lanus-Universitario

Group 5
Cerro (Uru)
Deportivo Quito (Ecu)
Internacional (Bra)
Winners of preliminary round game 5

Feb 9 Cerro-Deportivo Quito
Feb 23 Internacional-*Game 5 winners*
Mar 9 *Game 5 winners*-Cerro
Mar 11 Deportivo Quito-Internacional
Mar 18 Cerro-Internacional
Mar 25 Deportivo Quito-*Game 5 winners*
Mar 31 Internacional-Cerro
Apr 1 *Game 5 winners*-Deportivo Quito
Apr 13 Deportivo Quito-Cerro
Apr 14 *Game 5 winners*-Internacional
Apr 22 Internacional-Deportivo Quito
Apr 22 Cerro-*Game 5 winners*

Group 6
Banfield (Arg)
Deportivo Cuenca (Ecu)
Morelia (Mex)
Nacional (Uru)

Feb 10 Banfield-Morelia
Feb 11 Nacional-Deportivo Cuenca
Feb 17 Deportivo Cuenca-Banfield
Feb 23 Morelia-Nacional
Mar 9 Deportivo Cuenca-Morelia
Mar 10 Nacional-Banfield
Mar 16 Banfield-Nacional
Mar 16 Morelia-Deportivo Cuenca
Mar 31 Morelia-Banfield
Apr 7 Deportivo Cuenca-Nacional
Apr 21 Nacional-Morelia
Apr 21 Banfield-Deportivo Cuenca

Group 7
Colo Colo (Chi)
Deportivo Italia (Ven)
Velez Sarsfield (Arg)
Winners of preliminary round game 4

Feb 10 Velez Sarsfield-*Game 4 winners*
Feb 16 Colo Colo-Deportivo Italia
Feb 23 Deportivo Italia-Velez Sarsfield
Feb 24 *Game 4 winners*-Colo Colo
Mar 11 Deportivo Italia-*Game 4 winners*
Mar 16 Colo Colo-Velez Sarsfield
Mar 24 *Game 4 winners*-Deportivo Italia
Mar 25 Velez Sarsfield-Colo Colo
Mar 31 *Game 4 winners*-Velez Sarsfield
Apr 6 Deportivo Italia-Colo Colo
Apr 15 Colo Colo-*Game 4 winners*
Apr 15 Velez Sarsfield-Deportivo Italia

Group 8
Caracas (Ven)
Flamengo (Bra)
Universidad de Chile (Chi)
Winners of preliminary round game 3

Feb 18 Univ de Chile-Caracas
Feb 24 Flamengo-*Game 3 winners*
Mar 10 Caracas-Flamengo
Mar 11 *Game 3 winners*-Univ de Chile
Mar 17 Caracas-*Game 3 winners*
Mar 17 Univ de Chile-Flamengo
Mar 24 *Game 3 winners*-Caracas
Apr 7 Flamengo-Univ de Chile
Apr 13 Caracas-Univ de Chile
Apr 14 *Game 3 winners*-Flamengo
Apr 21 Univ de Chile-*Game 3 winners*
Apr 21 Flamengo-Caracas

Group winners and the six runners-up with the best record qualify for 1st knockout round, to which Guadalajara (Mex) and San Luis (Mex) received byes

ARGENTINA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Friday, January 29
Estudiantes 3 (Carrusca 41, Boselli 66, pen 71)
Arsenal 0

Godoy Cruz 1 (Riguain 81)
Gimnasia La Plata 0

Saturday, January 30
Atletico Tucuman 0
San Lorenzo 1 (Bottaguray 24)

Racing Club 3 (Luguercio 39, Martinez 43, Rieler 77)
Rosario Central 0

Tigre 0
Chacarita Juniors 2 (Echeverria 12, 53)

Velez Sarsfield 1 (Silva 36)
Colon 1 (Acosta 79)

Sunday, January 31
Argentinos Juniors 2 (Munoz og 81, Sosa 90)
Boca Juniors 2 (Palermo 44, Riquelme 86)

Lanus 3 (Castillejos 74, Velazquez pen 85, Lagos 90)
Huracan 2 (Toranzo 19, Machin 22)

who had a spell as interim coach at Palmeiras last year.

CHILE

San Felipe are back in style

Newly-promoted San Felipe marked their return to the top flight with a shock 3-2 win over champions Colo Colo, whose goalkeeper Francisco Prieto gifted the home side the penalty from which Gaston Leva put San Felipe 2-1 ahead, before being caught out of position for substitute Juan Estay's winner.

Elsewhere, Nublense – who scored just 15 goals in total during last season's clausura – won 6-5 away to Audax Italiano.

MEXICO

Chivas looking good

After three rounds of matches, Guadalajara are the only side with a 100 per cent record. However, they did have to score three times in the last 12 minutes and come from two down to win 3-2 against Tecos, who have still yet to gain a point.

Having lost 3-0 away to Atlas, Monterrey beat Cruz Azul 2-0 in a repeat of December's apertura Final, with Neri Cardozo and Abraham Carreno on target.

Race...Guadalajara's Javier Hernandez (left) takes on Tecos' Daniel Alcantar

Newell's Old Boys 0
Independiente 0

River Plate 0
Banfield 1 (Fernandez 75)

ARGENTINA – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Estudiantes	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Racing	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Chacarita Jrs	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Lanus	1	1	0	0	3	2	3
Banfield	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Godoy Cruz	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
San Lorenzo	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Argentinos Jrs	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Boca Juniors	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Colon	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Velez	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Independiente	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Newell's	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Huracan	1	0	0	1	2	3	0
At Tucuman	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Gimnasia LP	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
River Plate	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Tigre	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Arsenal	1	0	0	1	0	3	0
Rosario	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

LEADING GOALSCORERS

2 Mauro Boselli (Estudiantes)
2 Mariano Echeverria (Chacarita Juniors)

CHILE

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Jan 23: San Felipe 3 Colo Colo 2; Everton 0 Union Espanola 1.
Jan 24: Cobreloa 2 Wanderers 1; Univ de Chile 5 Cobresal 1; Santiago Morning 2 La Serena 3; Huachipato 2 San Luis 1; Palestino 1 Univ de Concepcion 1.
Jan 25: Audax Italiano 5 Nublense 6.
Jan 29: Univ de Concepcion 0 San Felipe 1; Wanderers 0 Huachipato 0.
Jan 30: Cobresal 3 Santiago Morning 0; San Luis 1 O'Higgins 2; La Serena 2 Univ de Chile 4; Nublense 0 Everton 2; Univ Catolica 2 Palestino 1.
Jan 31: Union Espanola 2 Audax Italiano 2; Colo Colo 3 Cobreloa 1.

CHILE – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Univ de Chile	2	2	0	0	9	3	6
San Felipe	2	2	0	0	4	2	6
U Espanola	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Huachipato	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Colo Colo	2	1	0	1	5	4	3
Everton	2	1	0	1	2	1	3
O'Higgins	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Univ Catolica	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Nublense	2	1	0	1	6	7	3
La Serena	2	1	0	1	5	6	3
Cobresal	2	1	0	1	4	5	3
Cobreloa	2	1	0	1	3	4	3
Audax Italiano	2	0	1	1	7	8	1
Palestino	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
U Concepcion	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Wanderers	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
San Luis	2	0	0	2	2	4	0
S Morning	2	0	0	2	2	6	0

COLOMBIA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Jan 30: America 2 Huila 2; Ind Medellin 0 Ind Santa Fe 0; Millonarios 2 Nacional 1.
Jan 31: Pereira 2 Junior 2; Cortulua 1 Chico 2; Cartagena 4 Once Caldas 3; Envigado 1 Cucuta 0; La Equidad 1 Quindio 0; Tolima 3 Dep Cali 1.

COLOMBIA – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tolima	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
Cartagena	1	1	0	0	4	3	3
Chico	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Millonarios	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Envigado	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
La Equidad	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
America	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Huila	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Junior	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Pereira	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Ind Medellin	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Ind Santa Fe	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Once Caldas	1	0	0	1	3	4	0
Cortulua	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Nacional	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Cucuta	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Quindio	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Dep Cali	1	0	0	1	1	3	0

PARAGUAY

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Jan 30: Tacuary 1 Cerro Porteno 2; Guarani 1 Libertad 0.
Jan 31: Sol de America 2 Nacional 5; Trinidense 0 3 de Febrero 1; Luqueno 2 Colombia 3; Rubio Nu 1 Olimpia 0.

PARAGUAY – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nacional	1	1	0	0	5	2	3
Colombia	1	1	0	0	3	2	3
Cerro Porteno	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
3 de Febrero	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Guarani	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Rubio Nu	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Luqueno	1	0	0	1	2	3	0
Tacuary	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Libertad	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Olimpia	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Trinidense	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Sol America	1	0	0	1	2	5	0

URUGUAY

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Jan 23: Atenas 3 Defensor 1; Cerrito 1 Liverpool 4; Nacional 3 Cerro Largo 1; River Plate 0 Fenix 1.
Jan 24: Danubio 4 Tacuarembo 5; Penarol 4 Wanderers 2; Rampla 2 Cerro 2.
Jan 29: Tacuarembo 1 Nacional 1.
Jan 30: Cerrito 1 Cerro Largo 1; Cerro 1 Penarol 2; Rampla 2 Wanderers 1.
Jan 31: Atenas 1 Liverpool 2; Defensor 0 Danubio 1; River Plate 3 Central Espanol 3.

URUGUAY – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	2	2	0	0	6	2	6
Penarol	2	2	0	0	6	3	6
Nacional	2	1	1	0	4	2	4
Tacuarembo	2	1	1	0	6	5	4
Rampla	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
Atenas	2	1	0	1	4	3	3
Fenix	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Danubio	2	1	0	1	5	5	3
C Espanol	1	0	1	0	3	3	1
Cerro	2	0	1	1	3	4	1
River Plate	2	0	1	1	3	4	1
Cerro Largo	2	0	1	1	2	4	1
Cerrito	2	0	1	1	2	5	1
Racing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wanderers	2	0	0	2	3	6	0
Defensor	2	0	0	2	1	4	0

VENEZUELA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Jan 17: Llaneros 1 Caracas 1; Trujillanos 3 Aragua 1; Monagas 2 El Vigia 1; Mineros 1 Lara 1; Yaracuyanos 0 Centro Italo 0; Estudiantes 0 Tachira 0; Carabobo 0 Anzoategui 1; Esppor 2 Zulia 0; Italia 2 Zamora 1.
Jan 21: Tachira 2 Carabobo 0.
Jan 23: Caracas 3 Trujillanos 1; Anzoategui 2 Esppor 3.
Jan 24: Aragua 1 Monagas 0; El Vigia 1 Mineros 1; Centro Italo 1 Llaneros 2; Yaracuyanos 2 Estudiantes 0; Zamora 1 Lara 1; Zulia 1 Italia 1.
Jan 28: Esppor 1 Tachira 2.
Jan 30: Italia 4 Yaracuyanos 1.

VENEZUELA – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Italia	3	2	1	0	7	3	7
Tachira	3	2	1	0	4	1	7
Esppor	3	2	0	1	6	4	6
Caracas	2	1	1	0	4	2	4
Llaneros	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Yaracuyanos	3	1	1	1	3	4	4
Trujillanos	2	1	0	1	4	4	3
Anzoategui	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Monagas	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Aragua	2	1	0	1	2	3	3
Lara	2	0	2	0	2	2	2
Mineros	2	0	2	0	2	2	2
El Vigia	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
Zamora	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
Centro Italo	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Zulia	2	0	1	1	1	3	1
Estudiantes	2	0	1	1	0	2	1
Carabobo	2	0	0	2	0	3	0

CENTRAL & NORTH AMERICA

CONCACAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Quarter-finals draw

Arabe Unido (Pan) v Cruz Azul (Mex)
Columbus Crew (USA) v Toluca (Mex)
Communicationes (Gtm) v Pachuca (Mex)
Marathon (Hnd) v Pumas UNAM (Mex)
1st legs - March 9-11; 2nd legs - March 16-18

MEXICO

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Jan 16: Jaguares 0 Cruz Azul 1; Monterrey 4 Indios 0; Pachuca 3 Tecos 0; Guadalajara 3 Toluca 1; Atlante 0 Queretaro 0.
Jan 17: Puebla 0 Tigres 1; Pumas 2 Atlas 0; Santos 3 Morelia 2; America 5 San Luis 1.
Jan 22: Tecos 2 Puebla 3.
Jan 23: Queretaro 1 Pachuca 0; Cruz Azul 0 Pumas 0; Morelia 2 America 0; Tigres 1 Guadalajara 3; Atlante 2 San Luis 3; Atlas 3 Monterrey 0.
Jan 24: Toluca 1 Jaguares 1; Indios 0 Santos 0.
Jan 30: Jaguares 2 Tigres 2; Monterrey 2 Cruz Azul 0; Guadalajara 3 Tecos 2; Pachuca 5 Atlante 1; San Luis 0 Morelia 2.
Jan 31: Puebla 1 Queretaro 2; Pumas 0 Toluca 0; Santos 1 Atlas 2; America 1 Indios 0.

MEXICO – CLOSING – GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guadalajara	3	3	0	0	9	4	9
Queretaro	3	2	1	0	3	1	7
Atlas	3	2	0	1	5	3	6
San Luis	3	1	0	2	4	9	3
Toluca	3	0	2	1	2	4	2
Indios	3	0	1	2	0	5	1

MEXICO – CLOSING – GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pachuca	3	2	0	1	8	2	6
America	3	2	0	1	6	2	6
Monterrey	3	2	0	1	6	3	6
Morelia	3	2	0	1	5	3	6
Puebla	3	1	0	2	4	5	3
Jaguares	3	0	2	1	3	4	2

MEXICO – CLOSING – GROUP 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pumas	3	1	2	0	2	0	5
Santos	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Tigres	3	1	1	1	4	5	4
Cruz Azul	3	1	1	1	1	2	4
Atlante	3	0	1	2	3	6	1
Tecos	3	0	0	3	4	9	0

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

T&T – CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY-OFFS – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Joe Public	25	15	7	3	59	28	52
S J Jabloteh	25	14	6	5	38	25	48
Caledonia	25	15	2	8	54	34	47
W Connection	25	12	9	4	40	17	45
Ma Pau	25	11	5	9	36	27	38
Defence Force	25	9	5	11	42	41	32

Teams carried forward record from regular season (20 rounds)

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Preliminary round draw

Apaches Club (Com) v Ferroviario (Moz)
APR (Rwa) v Recreativo (Ang)
Armed Forces (Gam) v JS Kabylie (Alg)
ASC Linguere (Sen) v Asante Kotoko (Gha)
Benin reps v Africa Sports (IvC)
Chad reps v Bayelsa United (Nig)
Diables Noirs (Con) v ES Setif (Alg)
Djoliba (Mli) v Al Ahly Benghazi (Lby)
East End Lions (SLe) v Esperance (Tun)
Ela Nguema (EnG) v Petro Atletico (Ang)
Fello Star (Gui) v Raja Casablanca (Mor)
Gaborone United (Bot) v Orlando Pirates (SAf)
La Passe (Sey) v Curepipe Starlight (Mts)
Mafunze (Zan) v Gunners (Zim)
Mbabane Swallows (Swa) v SuperSport Utd (SAf)
Os Bolantas (GuB) v Difaa Jadidi (Mor)
Revenue Authority (Ugd) v Zanaco (Zam)

Hot shot...Caravella

AUSTRALIA

Goal difference separates top two

Gold Coast United drew level on points with Melbourne Victory at the top of the table after beating the league leaders 1-0 at Skilled Park.

Zenan Caravella scored the decisive goal 14 minutes from time for the hosts.

Meanwhile, Adelaide United have bolstered their squad for the upcoming Asian Champions League by signing ex-Newcastle Jets midfielder Adam Griffiths on a six-month deal. The 30-year-old midfielder recently left Saudi Arabian side Al Shabab.

INDIA

League expansion

Next season's I-League will be increased by two teams, making a total of 16.

Equaliser...Aghily

IRAN

Leaders snatch draw

Sepahan needed two late goals to snatch a draw at Saba and extended their lead at the top of the league to four points.

Davoud Haghi and Hamidreza Farzaneh put the hosts in front, before Ibrahima Toure replied with three minutes remaining and Seyed Aghily equalised in injury time.

Second-place Zob-Ahan

Sahel (Ngr) v Club Africain (Tun)
Saint George (Eth) v Al Merreikh (Sud)
Sao Tome reps v Union Douala (Cam)
Sofapaka (Ken) v Ismaili (Egy)
Stade Mandji (Gab) v ASFA Yennega (BuF)
Stade Tamponnaise (Reu) v Ajesaia (Mad)
Tempete Mocaf (CAR) v Al Ittihad (Lby)
Vital'o (Bdi) v Tiko United (Cam)
Young Africans (Tan) v St Eloi Lupopo (DRC)
1st legs - Feb 12-14; 2nd legs - Feb 26-28

Byes to 1st round:
Al Ahly (Egy), Al Hilal (Sud), ASEC Abidjan (IvC), Dynamos (Zim), Heartland (Nig), TP Mazembe (DRC; holders)

CONFEDERATION CUP

Preliminary round draw

AFC Leopards (Ken) v Banks (Eth)
AS Fun (Ngr) v Issia Wazi (IvC)
ASC Diaraf (Sen) v FUS Rabat (Mor)
Atletico Olympic (Bdi) v Warri Wolves (Nig)
Atraco (Rwa) v El Amal (Sud)
Benfica (GuB) v Baraka Djoma (Gui)
Caps United (Zim) v Mbabane Highlanders (Swa)
Central Parade (SLe) v CO Bamako (Mli)
Chief reps v Al Ahly Tripoli (Lby)
Costa do Sol (Moz) v UF Santos (Bot)
DC Motema Pembe (DRC) v *Cent Af Rep reps*
El Dragons (EqG) v AC Leopards (Con)
Lengthens (Zim) v AS Adema (Mad)
Miembeni (Zan) v Petrojet (Egy)
Pamplemousses (Mts) v Moroka Swallows (SAf)
Panthere Nde (Cam) v *Benin reps*
Sao Tome reps v Academia Soyo (Ang)
Sewe Sport (IvC) v USFA (BuF)
Tersana (Lby) v CR Belouizdad (Alg)
1st legs - Feb 12-14; 2nd legs - Feb 26-28

SC Villa (Uga) v Khartoum-3 (Sud) –
SC Villa withdrew; Khartoum-3 walkover

Byes to 1st round:
AS Vita Club (DRC), Cotonsport (Cam), CS Sfaxien (Tun), Enyimba (Nig), Etoile Sahel (Tun), FAR Rabat (Mor), FC105 (Gab), Haras Hedoud (Egy), Primeiro Agosto (Ang), Simba (Tan), Stade Malien (Mli), Zesco United (Zam)

ANGOLA

ANGOLA – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Petro Atletico	26	17	5	4	44	21	56
Recreativo	26	14	8	4	48	29	48
Benfica	26	14	5	7	42	32	47
Primeiro Agosto	26	13	6	7	47	30	45
Academica S	26	12	3	11	33	36	39
Santos	26	9	9	8	29	29	36
AS Arinoso	26	8	8	9	34	28	35
Interclube	26	8	9	9	33	26	33
Casila	26	8	8	11	28	30	33
Onze Bravos	26	8	6	10	24	33	32
CD Huila	26	8	4	13	22	30	31
Kabuscorp	26	7	3	11	37	39	29
Primeiro Maio (R)	26	6	5	15	20	39	23
Ac'mica L (R)	26	5	2	19	14	53	17

IVORY COAST

IVORY COAST – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
ASEC	26	16	8	2	40	10	56
Africa Sports	26	14	8	6	38	18	48
Sewe Sport	26	14	5	7	30	19	47
Issia Wazi	26	12	7	7	25	23	43
JC Abidjan	26	9	12	5	25	15	39
Stella	26	11	6	9	27	27	39
Stade Abidjan	26	9	10	7	23	18	37
Guingamp	26	8	6	12	17	26	30
Bassam	26	4	15	7	24	23	27
SO Armee	26	6	9	11	23	30	27
Sabe	26	6	8	12	26	34	26
Denguele	26	5	11	10	12	25	26
Yeo Martial (R)	26	6	7	13	21	44	25
Biegerville (R)	26	2	10	14	17	39	16

SUDAN

SUDAN – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Hilal O	24	22	1	1	60	8	67
Al Merreikh	24	18	6	0	64	16	60
Khartoum-3	24	9	9	6	28	27	36
Al Amal	24	9	8	7	29	29	36
Al Nil	24	9	5	10	26	22	32
Al Ahli	24	7	10	7	29	31	31
Al Mawrada	24	7	8	9	29	29	29
Merghani	24	7	7	10	28	31	28
Al Hilal PS	24	7	6	11	25	43	27
Hay Al Arab	24	6	8	10	27	32	26
Al Hilal K	24	5	7	12	27	41	22
Al Ittihad	24	5	7	12	24	49	22
Al Shimali (R)	24	3	2	19	13	49	11

ZAMBIA

ZAMBIA – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zanaco	30	19	6	5	50	16	63
Zesco	30	18	9	3	36	18	63
Power Dynamos	30	14	12	4	34	22	54
City of Lusaka	30	13	9	8	29	25	48
Choma Eagles	30	12	9	9	30	25	45
G Buffaloes	30	13	6	11	31	26	45
Red Arrows	30	11	10	9	33	22	43
Forest Rangers	30	10	11	8	29	30	41
K Blades	30	9	12	9	27	28	39
Roan	30	10	7	13	33	38	37
K Warriors	30	9	10	11	20	23	37
L Dynamos	30	9	9	12	26	26	36
Chawishi (R)	30	7	12	11	23	33	33
Zambia (R)	30	7	6	17	13	31	27
N Leopards (R)	30	4	10	16	17	39	22
Y Arrows (R)	30	3	6	21	18	47	15

ASIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Preliminary round

West Asia section
Semi-final
Al Karamah (Syr) 0 Al Wahda (UAE) 1
Al Karamah enter AFC Cup at group stage

Final
Al Wahda v Churchill Brothers (Ind)
Winners qualify for group stage (Group B); losers enter AFC Cup at group stage

East Asia section
Semi-finals
Singapore Armed Forces (Sin) 3 Sriwijaya (Ins) 0
Da Nang (Vie) 0 Muangthong United (Tha) 3
Losers enter AFC Cup at group stage

Final
Singapore Armed Forces v Muangthong United
Winners qualify for group stage (Group G); losers enter AFC Cup at group stage

Group stage draw & schedule

Group A
Al Ahli (Sau)
Al Gharafa (Qat)
Al Jazira (UAE)
Esteghlal (Irn)

Feb 23 Al Jazira-Al Gharafa
Feb 23 Al Ahli-Esteghlal
Mar 9 Al Gharafa-Al Ahli
Mar 9 Esteghlal-Al Jazira
Mar 23 Esteghlal-Al Gharafa
Mar 23 Al Ahli-Al Jazira
Mar 31 Al Gharafa-Esteghlal
Mar 31 Al Jazira-Al Ahli
Apr 14 Al Gharafa-Al Jazira
Apr 14 Esteghlal-Al Ahli
Apr 28 Al Jazira-Esteghlal
Apr 28 Al Ahli-Al Gharafa

Group B
Al Ittihad (Sau)
Bunyodkor (Uzb)
Zob-Ahan (Irn)
West Asia preliminary round winners

Feb 23 Bunyodkor-Al Ittihad
Feb 23 Zob-Ahan-*W Asia prelim winners*
Mar 9 *W Asia prelim winners*-Bunyodkor
Mar 9 Al Ittihad-Zob-Ahan
Mar 24 *W Asia prelim winners*-Al Ittihad
Mar 24 Zob-Ahan-Bunyodkor
Mar 30 Bunyodkor-Zob-Ahan
Mar 30 Al Ittihad-*W Asia prelim winners*
Apr 14 *W Asia prelim winners*-Zob-Ahan
Apr 14 Al Ittihad-Bunyodkor
Apr 28 Bunyodkor-*W Asia prelim winners*
Apr 28 Zob-Ahan-Al Ittihad

Group C
Al Ain (UAE)
Al Shabab (Sau)
Pakhtakor (Uzb)
Sepahan (Irn)

Feb 24 Al Ain-Pakhtakor
Feb 24 Al Shabab-Sepahan
Mar 10 Sepahan-Al Ain
Mar 10 Pakhtakor-Al Shabab
Mar 23 Pakhtakor-Sepahan
Mar 23 Al Ain-Al Shabab
Mar 31 Sepahan-Pakhtakor
Mar 31 Al Shabab-Al Ain
Apr 13 Pakhtakor-Al Ain
Apr 13 Sepahan-Al Shabab
Apr 27 Al Ain-Sepahan
Apr 27 Al Shabab-Pakhtakor

Group D
Al Ahli (UAE)
Al Hilal (Sau)
Al Sadd (Qat)
Mes (Irn)

Feb 24 Al Sadd-Al Hilal
Feb 24 Mes-Al Ahli
Mar 10 Al Ahli-Al Sadd
Mar 10 Al Hilal-Mes
Mar 24 Al Sadd-Mes
Mar 24 Al Hilal-Al Ahli
Mar 30 Mes-Al Sadd
Mar 30 Al Ahli-Al Hilal
Apr 13 Al Ahli-Mes
Apr 13 Al Hilal-Al Sadd
Apr 27 Mes-Al Hilal
Apr 27 Al Sadd-Al Ahli

Group E
Beijing Guoan (Chi)
Kawasaki Frontale (Jap)
Melbourne Victory (Aus)
Songnam Ilhwa (SKo)

Feb 23 Songnam-Kawasaki
Feb 23 Beijing-Melbourne
Mar 9 Kawasaki-Beijing
Mar 9 Melbourne-Songnam
Mar 23 Songnam-Beijing
Mar 23 Kawasaki-Melbourne
Mar 31 Beijing-Songnam
Mar 31 Melbourne-Kawasaki
Apr 14 Kawasaki-Songnam
Apr 14 Melbourne-Beijing
Apr 28 Songnam-Melbourne
Apr 28 Beijing-Kawasaki

Group F
Changchun Yatai (Chi)
Chonbuk Motors (SKo)
Kashima Antlers (Jap)
Persipura Jayapura (Ins)

Feb 23 Persipura-Chonbuk
Feb 23 Kashima-Changchun
Mar 9 Changchun-Persipura
Mar 9 Chonbuk-Kashima
Mar 24 Changchun-Chonbuk
Mar 24 Kashima-Persipura
Mar 30 Persipura-Kashima
Mar 30 Chonbuk-Changchun
Apr 14 Changchun-Kashima
Apr 14 Chonbuk-Persipura
Apr 28 Persipura-Changchun
Apr 28 Kashima-Chonbuk

Group G
Gamba Osaka (Jap)
Henan Jianye (Chi)
Suwon Bluewings (SKo)
East Asia preliminary round winners

Feb 24 Suwon-Gamba
Feb 24 Henan-*E Asia prelim winners*
Mar 10 *E Asia prelim winners*-Suwon
Mar 10 Gamba-Henan
Mar 23 *E Asia prelim winners*-Gamba
Mar 23 Henan-Suwon
Mar 31 Gamba-*E Asia prelim winners*
Mar 31 Suwon-Henan
Apr 13 *E Asia prelim winners*-Henan
Apr 13 Gamba-Suwon
Apr 27 Suwon-*E Asia prelim winners*
Apr 27 Henan-Gamba

Group H
Adelaide United (Aus)
Pohang Steelers (SKo)
Sanfrecce Hiroshima (Jap)
Shandong Luneng (Chi)

Feb 24 Sanfrecce-Shandong
Feb 24 Adelaide-Pohang
Mar 10 Shandong-Adelaide

failed to capitalise on Sepahan's slip as they were beaten 1-0 at home by Pas.

IRAQ

Club sides kicked out of continental competition

Arbil and Al Najaf were disqualified from this year's AFC Cup following FIFA's ban on the Iraq Football Association because of outside interference in its affairs.

Success...Al Shabab get their hands on the Prince Faisal Cup once again

SAUDI ARABIA

A dozen titles

Al Hilal secured their 12th league championship with a 2-0 victory over Al Hazm. Essa Al Mehyani opened the scoring four minutes before the interval with Nawaf Al Abed adding the second in the 73rd minute.

Meanwhile, Al Shabab retained the Prince Faisal Cup, beating Al Hilal 2-1 in the Final.

THAILAND

New coach off to flier

Rene Desaeyere, who left Belgian third division side Turnhout to coach Muangthong United, led his new side to a 3-0 win over Da Nang of Vietnam to set up a clash with Singapore Armed Forces for an Asian Champions League group place. Panupong Wongsa, Christian Kouakou and Jakkaphan Kaewprom scored for United.

Mar 10 Pohang-Sanfrecce
Mar 24 Adelaide-Sanfrecce
Mar 24 Pohang-Shandong
Mar 30 Sanfrecce-Adelaide
Mar 30 Shandong-Pohang
Apr 13 Shandong-Sanfrecce
Apr 13 Pohang-Adelaide
Apr 27 Sanfrecce-Pohang
Apr 27 Adelaide-Shandong

Top two in each group qualify for 1st knockout rnd

AFC CUP

Draw

Group A
Ahli Sana'a (Yem)
Sahara (Oma)
Shabab Al Ordon (Jor)
Losers of a Champions League preliminary round West Asia section tie

Group B
Al Hilal (Yem)
Kuwait SC (Kuw)
Losers of a Champions League preliminary round West Asia section tie

Group C
Al Ahed (Leb)
Al Jaish (Syr)
Kazma (Kuw)
Nasaf (Uzb)

Group D
Al Ittihad (Syr)
Al Najmeh (Leb)
East Bengal (Ind)
Qadsia (Kuw)

Group E
Al Nahda (Oma)
Al Rayyan (Qat)
Al Wehdat (Jor)
Riffa (Bhr)

Group F
Binh Duong (Vie)
Selangor (Mly)
Victory (Mdv)
Losers of a Champions League preliminary round East Asia section tie

Group G
Persiwa (Ins)
South China (HK)
VB (Mdv)
Losers of a Champions League preliminary round East Asia section tie

Group H
Geylang (Sin)
Tai Po (HK)
Thai Port (Tha)
Losers of a Champions League preliminary round East Asia section tie

Top two in each group qualify for 1st knockout rnd

Games to be played February 23-April 28

AUSTRALIA

Regular season

Jan 9: Wellington 3 Brisbane 1; Central Coast 1 North Queensland 1; Gold Coast 1 Adelaide 1.
Jan 10: Perth 0 Sydney 0; Newcastle 3 Melbourne 2.
Jan 13: Gold Coast 2 Newcastle 0.
Jan 15: Wellington 3 North Queensland 0; Adelaide 1 Central Coast 1.
Jan 16: Melbourne 6 Perth 2; Brisbane 0 Newcastle 2.
Jan 17: Sydney 0 Gold Coast 1.
Jan 19: Adelaide 2 Perth 3.
Jan 22: Perth 2 Wellington 0; Central Coast 1 Gold Coast 1.
Jan 23: Melbourne 2 Adelaide 0; North Queensland 1 Brisbane 1.
Jan 24: Newcastle 1 Sydney 3.
Jan 26: Melbourne 4 Wellington 0.
Jan 29: Gold Coast 1 Melbourne 0.
Jan 30: Brisbane 1 Sydney 0; Wellington 1 Adelaide 0.
Jan 31: Perth 3 Central Coast 1.
Feb 2: North Queensland 2 Newcastle 1.

AUSTRALIA – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Melbourne	25	13	5	7	45	30	44
Gold Coast	25	13	5	7	38	32	44
Sydney	25	13	3	9	30	21	42
Perth	25	10	6	9	36	31	36
Wellington	25	8	10	7	33	29	34
Newcastle	25	10	4	11	32	40	34
Brisbane	25	8	6	11	32	38	30
N Queensland	25	7	8	10	27	43	29
Central Coast	25	6	9	10	29	28	27
Adelaide	25	5	8	12	20	32	23

IRAN

Jan 9: Persepolis 1 Zob-Ahan 1.
Jan 10: AbooMoslem 1 Shahin 1; Mes 0 Saba 0; Steel Azin 1 Rah-Ahan 1; Esteghlal Ahvaz 0 Pas 1; Malavan 1 Moghavemat 0; Saipa 1 Esteghlal Tehran 1; Sepahan 1 Foolad 1; Teraktor Sazi 1 Peykan 0.
Jan 15: Moghavemat 0 Saipa 0; Pas 1 Sepahan 1; Esteghlal Tehran 2 Teraktor Sazi 2; Foolad 0 Malavan 0; Peykan 0 Steel Azin 1; Saba 2 Esteghlal Ahvaz 0.
Jan 16: Rah-Ahan 1 AbooMoslem 0; Shahin 4 Persepolis 1; Zob-Ahan 0 Mes 0.
Jan 22: AbooMoslem 2 Peykan 1; Persepolis 1 Rah-Ahan 0; Mes 1 Shahin 0; Pas 2 Saba 1; Esteghlal Ahvaz 1 Zob-Ahan 2; Saipa 1 Foolad 2; Sepahan 2 Malavan 0; Teraktor Sazi 0 Moghavemat 0.
Jan 23: Steel Azin 0 Esteghlal Tehran 2.
Jan 28: Moghavemat 1 Steel Azin 2; Foolad 1 Teraktor Sazi 1; Malavan 1 Saipa 0; Rah-Ahan 3 Mes 2; Saba 2 Sepahan 2; Shahin 0 Esteghlal Ahvaz 0; Zob-Ahan 0 Pas 1.
Jan 29: Peykan 1 Persepolis 3; Esteghlal Tehran 3 AbooMoslem 1.

IRAN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sepahan	24	14	7	3	46	20	49
Zob-Ahan	25	12	9	4	37	24	45
Esteghlal T	25	10	10	5	38	27	40
Persepolis	25	10	10	5	37	30	40
Steel Azin	25	10	9	6	41	37	39
Malavan	25	9	9	7	22	28	36
Teraktor Sazi	25	8	11	6	32	29	35
Peykan	25	8	9	8	27	27	33
Moghavemat	24	7	11	6	27	23	32
Saba	25	9	5	11	37	36	32
Pas	25	8	7	10	27	31	31
Saipa	25	7	8	10	29	37	29
Esteghlal A	25	7	7	11	28	40	28
Shahin	25	5	12	8	30	30	27
Mes	25	7	6	12	34	42	27
Rah-Ahan	25	6	8	11	28	37	26
Foolad	25	4	13	8	20	23	25
AbooMoslem	25	3	9	13	21	40	18

MALAYSIA

MALAYSIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Selangor	26	20	3	3	64	21	63
Perlis	26	17	5	4	40	18	56
Kedah	26	16	3	7	45	28	51
Johor	26	15	3	8	53	27	48
Terengganu	26	15	2	9	46	32	47
Kelantan	26	14	2	10	49	36	44
N Sembilan	26	11	5	10	44	35	38
KL Plus	26	11	5	10	35	26	38
Kuala Muda	26	12	1	13	32	41	37
Perak	26	9	5	12	27	36	32
IPB-MyTeam	26	9	3	14	29	50	30
Pulau Pinang	26	5	4	17	28	55	19
Pahang	26	5	2	19	32	63	17
PDRM (R)	26	0	3	23	19	75	3

SINGAPORE

SINGAPORE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Armed Forces	30	22	1	7	73	31	67
Tampines	30	16	8	6	47	25	56
Gombak	30	14	11	5	52	32	53
Home	30	16	5	9	50	32	53
Super Reds	30	14	8	8	52	34	50
Geylang	30	12	4	14	36	38	40
Albirex	30	11	5	14	38	47	38
Young Lions	30	9	7	14	33	48	34
Woodlands	30	8	7	15	23	46	31
Sengkang P'ro	30	5	6	19	26	58	21
Balestier K'sa	30	4	8	20	22	58	18

Brunei DPMM were expelled; all results expunged

THAILAND

THAILAND – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Muangthong	30	19	8	3	48	20	65
Chonburi	30	18	6	4	50	30	62
B'kok Glass	30	16	8	6	45	31	56
Tero Sasana	30	15	6	9	53	34	51
Osotspa	30	13	8	9	36	32	47
Thai Port	30	12	8	10	33	30	44
Telephone Org	30	10	12	8	33	33	42
S Sakhon	30	8	13	9	29	32	37
Prov Elec Auth	30	9	9	12	37	41	36
S Songkhram	30	9	7	14	22	31	34
Pattaya	30	7	11	12	27	33	32
Rajnavy	30	8	6	16	28	39	30
Bangkok Utd	30	5	15	10	24	34	30
Sriracha (R)	30	8	6	16	28	34	30
Chula (R)	30	4	14	12	29	47	26
N Pathom (R)	30	6	7	17	32	53	25

UZBEKISTAN

UZBEKISTAN – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bunyodkor	30	28	2	0	85	13	86
Pakhtakor	30	18	10	2	63	16	64
Nasaf	30	16	7	7	45	27	55
Olmaliq	30	15	3	12	50	38	48
Neftchi	30	14	4	12	43	38	46
Lokomotiv	30	11	9	10	34	40	42
Andijon	30	10	9	11	47	48	39
Shortan	30	11	6	13	36	50	39
Samarkand	30	11	5	14	44	42	38
Xorazm	30	9	11	10	30	38	38
Qizilqum	30	10	5	15	33	56	35
Metallurg	30	7	10	13	36	49	31
Mashal	30	6	6	16	32	43	30
Navbahor	30	7	7	16	21	48	28
Buxoro (R)	30	6	6	18	40	59	24
Sogdiyona (R)	30	6	6	18	24	66	24

OCEANIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Auckland (NZ)	3	2	1	0	6	2	7
Waitakere (NZ)	3	1	2	0	4	2	5
Magenta (NC)	3	0	2	1	3	4	2
Manu Ua (Tah)	3	0	1	2	1	8	1

Group B

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tafea (Van)	3	2	1	0	7	4	7
Lautoka (Fij)	3	2	0	1	6	4	6
Hekari (PNG)	3	1	1	1	6	6	4
Malait (Sol)	3	0	0	3	2	7	0

Remaining matchdays:
February 12-20, March 5-7, March 27/28

Group winners qualify for the Final

R (in tables) = relegated

FORTHCOMING FIXTURES

March 3
Asian Cup, final round of group games; international friendlies
March 6
Japanese J. League starts
March 9/10
UEFA Champions League first knockout round first leg
March 9/10/11
CONCACAF Champions League quarter-finals first leg
March 12
Russian Premier League starts
March 13
Norwegian Premier League starts; Swedish Allsvenskan starts
March 16/17
UEFA Champions League first knockout round second leg
March 16/17/18
CONCACAF Champions League quarter-finals second leg
March 19/20/21
CAF Champions League first round first leg
March 25
USA MSL starts
March 30/31
UEFA Champions League quarter-finals first leg

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP

SQUADS 2010

ALGERIA

GOALKEEPERS

16	Fawzi CHAOUCHI	05.12.84	ES Setif
1	Mohamed BOUSSEHIB	05.02.78	CR Belouizdad
23	Mohamed ZEMMAMOUCHE	02.01.85	USM Alger

DEFENDERS

12	Rafik HALICHE	03.07.79	MC Alger
3	Nadir BELHADJ	18.06.82	Portsmouth (Eng)
2	Madjid BOUGUERRA	07.10.82	Rangers (Sco)
5	Rafik HALICHE	02.06.86	Nacional (Por)
14	Abdelkader LAFTAOUI	09.07.81	ES Setif
11	Slimane RAHIL	20.10.75	ES Setif
4	Antar YAHIA	21.08.82	Bochum (Ger)
17	Samir ZAOUI	03.06.75	ASO Chlef

MIDFIELDERS

22	Djamel ABDOUN	14.02.86	Nantes (Fra)
7	Yacine BEZZAZ	10.01.81	Strasbourg (Fra)
8	Khaled LEMMOUCHIA	06.12.81	ES Setif
6	Yazid MANSOURI	25.02.78	Lorient (Fra)
13	Karim MATMOUR	25.06.85	Borussia MG (Ger)
20	Mourad MEGHNI	16.04.84	Lazio (Ita)
19	Hassan YEBDA	14.05.84	Portsmouth (Eng)
15	Karim ZIANI	17.06.82	Wolfsburg (Ger)

FORWARDS

18	Hameur BOUAZZA	22.02.85	Blackpool (Eng)
9	Abdelkader GHEZZAL	05.12.84	Siena (Ita)
10	Rafik SAIFI	07.02.75	Al Kheir (Uae)
21	Abdelmalek ZIAYA	21.01.84	Al Ittihad (Sau)

COACH

Rabah SAADANE 03.05.46

ANGOLA

GOALKEEPERS

12	CARLOS Fernandes	08.12.79	Rio Ave (Por)
1	LAMA	01.02.81	Petro Atletico
22	WILSON	22.07.84	Caala

DEFENDERS

4	ALEX GAMES	18.04.78	Sagrada Esperanca
3	CHIQUE	28.12.84	Santos
2	JAMBANA	13.06.88	Petro Atletico
5	KALI	11.06.78	Arles-Avignon (Fra)
21	MARINA	02.08.83	Petro Atletico
15	RICARDO MARQUES	03.08.77	Leeds United (Eng)
20	STELIVO	24.01.89	Unico Luiria (Por)
18	Francisco ZORELA	03.06.83	Kuban Krasnodar (Rus)

MIDFIELDERS

6	DAVID	20.03.81	Petro Atletico
19	DEJAN	04.07.81	Timisoara (Rom)
14	GIRLAN Campos	30.05.87	Maritimo (Por)
11	Sebastian GILBERTO	21.09.82	Al Ahly (Egy)
7	JOJO	27.09.87	Petro Atletico
8	KANU	18.08.81	Petro Atletico
17	ZE KALANGA	12.06.83	Dinamo Bucharest (Rom)

FORWARDS

16	FLAVIO Amado	30.12.79	Al Shabab (Sau)
12	JOHNSON Macaba	23.11.78	CRD Libolo
10	LOVE	14.03.79	Primeiro Agosto
9	MANTORRAS	18.03.82	Beitica (Ptr)
23	MANUCHO	07.03.83	Real Valladolid (Spa)

COACH

Manuel JOSE (Por) 09.04.45

BENIN

GOALKEEPERS

3	Valere AMOUSSOU	18.03.87	AS Porto-Novo
2	Rachad CHITOU	18.09.76	Wikki Tourists (Nig)
1	Yoann GUIDONOU	17.05.86	Libourne (Fra)

DEFENDERS

4	Khaled ADENON	28.07.85	Bastia (Fra)
5	Mouftaou ADJOU	10.04.91	Aspac
6	Romuald BOCO	08.07.85	Sligo Rovers (Ire)
7	Damien CHRYSOSTOME	24.05.82	Denizlispor (Tur)
8	Emmanuel IMOROU	16.09.83	Gueugnon (Fra)
9	Reda JOHNSON	21.03.83	Plymouth Argyle (Eng)
10	Junior SALUMUN	08.04.86	Aspac
11	Faliksen SINGBO	25.10.83	Lokomotiv Plovdiv (Bul)

MIDFIELDERS

12	Gerard ADJAMOUNME	26.11.86	Soleil
13	Jocelyn AHOUEYA	19.12.85	Sion (Sui)
16	Pascal ANGAN	19.04.85	Wydad Casablanca (Mar)
14	Djimon KONBOU	14.11.80	Evian TG (Fra)
17	Mouritala OGUNBIYI	18.10.82	Guingamp (Fra)
18	Arnaud SEKA	30.10.85	Tonnerre d'Abomey
19	Stephane SESSEGNON	01.06.84	PSG (Fra)
15	Sedjatch TCHOMOGO	13.08.85	East Riffa (Bhr)

FORWARDS

20	Mohammed AMOUNI	28.11.89	Evian TG (Fra)
21	Moubarak BOUERA	05.01.85	Almadina (Lby)
22	Razak OMOTOYOSSI	08.10.85	Metz (Fra)
23	Michael POTE	24.09.84	Nice (Fra)

COACH

Michel DOUSSOUKI (Fra) 28.05.59

BURKINA FASO

GOALKEEPERS

1	Daouda DIAKITE	20.03.83	Al Mokawloon Al Arab (Egy)
22	Germain SANOU	26.05.82	Centre St Etienne
16	Adama SAWADOGO	20.01.90	ASFA Yennenga

DEFENDERS

2	Ibrahim SANOU	06.11.86	Alania Vladikavkaz (Rus)
6	Bakari KONE	27.04.88	Guingamp (Fra)
17	Paul KOULIBALY	24.05.86	Ahlithad (Uae)
2	Moussa OUATTARA	31.12.81	Kaiserslautern (Ger)
12	Hub MAHAMBEYGUIRI	22.03.84	Unao Leiria (Por)
4	Mamadou TALL	04.12.82	Unao Leiria (Por)

MIDFIELDERS

18	Charles KONDRE	09.02.88	Marseille (Fra)
8	Mahamadou KERE	02.01.82	Charleroi (Bel)
5	Mohamed KOFFI	30.12.86	Petrojet (Egy)
20	Abdoul Aziz NIKIEMA	12.06.85	Bingdao Innoon (Chn)
11	Jonathan PITROIPA	12.04.86	Hamburg (Ger)
7	Florent ROUAMBA	31.12.86	Sheriff Tiraspol (Mol)

FORWARDS

21	Habib BAMOGO	08.05.82	Nice (Fra)
23	Wilfried DALIMA	20.03.85	Sheriff Tiraspol (Mol)
9	Moumouni DAGANO	03.01.81	Al Kheir (Uae)
19	Youssef KONE	19.07.82	CFR Cluj (Rom)
13	Issouf OUATTARA	07.10.88	Unao Leiria (Por)
10	Wilfried SANOU	16.03.84	Koln (Ger)
15	Narcisse YAMEOGO	19.11.80	Meghan (Aze)
14	Patrick ZOUNDI	19.07.82	Fortuna Dusseldorf (Ger)

COACH

Paulo DUARTE (Por) 06.04.59

CAMEROON

GOALKEEPERS

16	Souleymanou HAMIDOU	22.11.73	Kayserispor (Tur)
1	Carlos KAMENI	18.02.84	Espanyol (Spa)
22	Guy Roland N'DY ASSEMBE	20.02.86	Valenciennes (Fra)

DEFENDERS

12	Henri BEDIMO	04.06.84	Chateauroux (Fra)
23	Andre BIKEY	06.01.85	Burnley (Eng)
2	Nicolas N'KOULOU	27.03.90	Monaco (Fra)
4	Rigobert SONG	01.06.76	Trabzonspor (Tur)

MIDFIELDERS

7	Gilles BIYIK	29.08.84	Hatachphi Zarar (Isr)
5	Jerome CHESKOIA	23.06.85	Lille (Fra)
18	Eyong ENOH	23.03.86	Ajax (Ned)
8	GEREMI	20.12.78	Ankaragucu (Tur)
11	Jean MAKOUN	29.05.83	Lyon (Fra)
20	Georges MANDEUCK	09.12.88	Karlsruhe (Ger)
19	Stephane MBIA	20.06.86	Marseille (Fra)
3	Landry N'GUEMO	28.11.85	Nancy (Fra)
6	Alexandre SONG	09.09.87	Arsenal (Eng)
13	Somen TCHOYI	29.03.83	Salzburg (Aut)

FORWARDS

14	Paul ALO'O	12.11.83	Nancy (Fra)
10	Achille EMANA	05.06.82	Real Betis (Spa)
9	Samuel ETO'O	10.03.81	Internazionale (Ita)
17	Mohamadou IDRISSOU	04.02.80	Freiburg (Ger)
15	Pierre WEMBO	20.01.82	Mallorca (Spa)

COACH

Paul LE GUEN (Fra) 01.03.64

EGYPT

GOALKEEPERS

20	Mahmoud ABOU EL SAOUD	30.11.81	El Mansoura
1	Essam EL HADARY	15.01.72	Ismaily
16	Abdelwahed EL SAYED	03.06.79	Zamalek

DEFENDERS

19	Mohamed ABDEL SHAFY	01.07.85	Zamalek
3	Ahmed AL MOHAMMADI	09.09.87	Enppi
5	Abdel EL SABBAH	30.01.74	Eskisehirspor (Tur)
2	Mahmoud FATHALLA	12.02.82	Zamalek
7	Ahmed FATHY	10.11.84	Al Ahly
20	Wael GOMAA	03.08.75	Al Ahly
14	Sayed MOAWAD	25.02.79	Al Ahly
4	Moataseem SALEH	02.09.80	Ismaily

MIDFIELDERS

8	Hosny ABD RABO	01.11.84	Al Ahli (UAE)
11	Ahmed EID	15.05.80	Haras El Hodood
15	SEDO	30.10.83	Al Ittihad
12	Hossam GHALY	15.12.81	Al Masar (Sau)
17	Ahmed HASSAN	02.05.75	Al Ahly
18	SHIKABALA	03.03.86	Zamalek
13	Abdelaziz TAWFIK	24.05.86	ENPPI

FORWARDS

22	Al-Sayed HAMDY	01.03.84	Petrojet
10	MOTEAB	20.02.83	Al Ahly
21	Ahmed RAUOF	15.04.82	ENPPI
9	Mohamed ZIDAN	11.12.81	Borussia Dortmund (Ger)

COACH

Hassan SHEHATA 19.06.49

GABON

GOALKEEPERS

22	Yves BITSEKI MOTO	23.04.83	Bitam
16	Claude NGIOMA	07.01.84	USM Libreville
1	Didier OVONO	17.03.83	Le Mans (Fra)

DEFENDERS

6	Ernest MUNUSSAGA	16.09.85	Nantes (Fra)
2	Georges AMBOUROUET	01.05.85	Makedonija (Mac)
17	Mesie EBOUE	04.07.82	Brest (Fra)
15	Arsene DO MARCOLINO	26.11.85	Les Herbiers (Fra)
5	Bruno ECUELE MANGA	16.06.80	Angers (Fra)
19	Rodrigue MOUHOUNDHA	21.08.82	AS Mangasport
4	Erwin MGUENA	07.03.84	Bitam

MIDFIELDERS

3	Arsene COPA	07.06.89	Sper (Hun)
10	Alain BOSSUKABE	05.01.77	TP Mazembe (DRC)
21	Thierry ISSIEMOU	21.03.83	Mouscron (Fra)
14	Paul KESSANY	16.04.85	Istres (Fra)
13	Zita MBANANGOYE	17.07.83	Sivasspor (Tur)
18	Cedric MOUBAMBA	14.10.79	Shofar (Isra)
7	Stephane MGUENA	28.11.84	Paris FC (Fra)

FORWARDS

9	Pierre-Emerick AUBAMEYANG	28.01.89	Lille (Fra)
12	Willy AUBAMEYANG	16.02.87	Cupen (Bel)
8	Daniel CUDJIGNI	07.02.77	Hull City (Eng)
20	Fabrice DO MARCOLINO	14.03.83	Stade Laval (Fra)
23	Pongui NEYE	07.10.85	Ankaragucu (Tur)
11	Eric MOULOUNGUI	04.07.84	Nice (Fra)

COACH

Alain GIRESSE (Fra) 02.06.52

GHANA

GOALKEEPERS

16	Daniel ADJEI	10.11.89	Liberty Professionals
22	Richard KINGSON	13.06.78	Wigan Athletic (Eng)
1	Philemon MCCARTHY	14.04.82	Hearts of Oak

DEFENDERS

18	Eric AMIDU	12.11.78	Hoda (Ned)
12	Lee ADDY	26.08.85	Bochum (Deutsch)
21	Harrison AFFUL	24.06.86	Esperance (Tun)
7	Samuel INKOOM	22.08.89	Basle (Sui)
5	John MENSAH	13.07.90	Free State Stars (SAf)
2	Hans SARPEI	20.06.76	Bayer L'Hosse (Ger)
15	Isaac VORSAH	21.06.86	Hoffenheim (Ger)

MIDFIELDERS

19	Emmanuel AFEYWUNG-BAIDU	02.12.90	Udinese (Ita)
6	Anthony AMAN	21.07.86	Rosenborg (Nor)
10	Kwadwo ASAMOAH	09.12.88	Udinese (Ita)
17	Baloni AKEW	27.09.85	Zamalek (Egy)
23	Hamidu DRAMAN	26.04.86	Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus)
8	Michael ESSIEN	03.12.82	Chelsea (Eng)
11	Moussa NARRY	19.04.86	Auxerre (Fra)
9	OFORI Agyemang	07.06.89	Al Sadd (Qat)

FORWARDS

20	Dominic ADIYIAH	10.07.89	Milan (Ita)
14	Matthew AMOAH	24.10.80	NAC Breda (Ned)
13	Andre AYEW	17.12.89	Arles-Avignon (Fra)
3	Asamoah GYAN	22.11.85	Rennes (Fra)
4	Hansford OSEI	05.12.90	Twente (Ned)

COACH

Milovan RAJEVAC (Ser) 02.01.54

SQUADS 2010

IVORY COAST

GOALKEEPERS

23	Vincent ANGBAN	02.02.85	ASEC Mimosas
1	Boubacar BARRY	30.12.78	Lokeren (Blg)
16	Aristide ZOGBO	30.12.81	Maccabi Netanya (Isr)

DEFENDERS

2	Benjamin ANGUISSA	28.11.86	Hanivel (Isr)
22	Souleymane DAMBA	13.01.85	Hibernian (Sco)
3	Arthur BOKA	02.04.82	Stuttgart (Ger)
20	Guy DEMEL	13.06.81	Hamburg (Ger)
21	Emmanuel EBOUE	04.06.83	Arsenal (Eng)
12	Abdoulaye MEITE	06.10.80	WBA (Eng)
4	Kolo TOURE	19.03.81	Manchester City (Eng)

MIDFIELDERS

7	Emerse FAE	24.01.84	Nice (Fra)
13	Jean-Jacques GOSSO	15.01.83	Monaco (Fra)
19	Emmanuel KONE	31.12.86	Internacional (Bra)
17	Siaka TIENE	22.02.82	Valenciennes (Fra)
9	Cheick TIOTE	21.06.86	Twente (Ned)
6	Yaya TOURE	13.05.83	Barcelona (Spa)
5	Didier ZOKORA	14.12.80	Sevilla (Spa)

FORWARDS

15	Arouna DIKONANE	26.11.80	Portsmouth (Eng)
11	Didier DROGBA	11.03.78	Chelsea (Eng)
10	GERVINHO	27.05.87	Lille (Fra)
8	Salomon KALOU	05.08.85	Chelsea (Eng)
18	Kader KEITA	06.08.81	Galatasaray (Tur)
14	Bakary KONE	17.09.81	Marseille (Fra)

COACH

Vahid HALILHODZIC (Bos)	15.10.52

MALAWI

GOALKEEPERS

16	Simplex KITAKA	24.02.80	MTL Wanderers
1	Swadic SAMIDI	21.10.83	Dynamos (SAF)
22	Charles SWINI	20.02.85	Super ESCOM

DEFENDERS

3	Nisses CHAWALA	08.08.85	Nuhti Lions (SAF)
12	Elias KAFOTEKA	17.01.78	Super ESCOM
6	Allan KAMANGA	29.12.81	Dynamos (SAF)
7	Peter MPASHA	04.09.81	Black Leopards (SAF)
21	Maugo MSONAPHA	14.05.82	Super ESCOM
23	Harry NYIRENDA	25.08.90	MTL Wanderers
5	James SANGALA	20.08.86	Primiero Agosto (Arg)

MIDFIELDERS

19	Davi BANDA	29.12.83	Red Lions
10	Joseph KAMWENDO	23.10.86	Orlando Pirates (SAF)
2	Peter MGANGIRA	06.10.80	Silver Strikers
13	Hellings NYANGULUGULA	05.05.80	Silver Strikers
15	Robert MFAMBI	11.09.86	Black Leopards (SAF)
8	Jacob NGWIRA	07.09.85	Cuiara Kicks (SAF)
18	Peter MADABWA	14.09.80	Thanda Royal Zulu (SAF)

FORWARDS

11	Esaau KANYENDA	27.09.82	KAMAZ (Rus)
4	Chiukepo MSOWOYA	23.09.68	APR (Rwa)
9	Hassani MWAFULIRWA	24.02.83	Hornkoping (Swe)
14	Victor NYIRENDA	23.08.86	Super ESCOM
20	Jhuszye NYONDO	25.07.88	Cuiara Kicks (SAF)
17	Jimmy ZAKAZAKA	27.12.84	Bay United (SAF)

COACH

Kinnah PHIRI	30.10.54

MALI

GOALKEEPERS

16	Soumbeïla DIAKITE	25.04.84	Stade Malien
1	Mahamadou SIDIBE	09.10.78	Omonia (Cyp)
22	Oumar SISSOKO	13.09.87	Metz (Fra)

DEFENDERS

2	Boubacar BERTHE	05.02.81	Jomo Cosmos (SAF)
5	Souleymane DIAMOUTENE	30.01.82	Bari (Ita)
22	Abdoulaye MARIKA	25.05.84	Stade Malien
13	Bakary SOUMARE	09.11.85	Boulogne (Fra)
3	Adama TAMBOURA	18.05.86	Helsingborgs (Swe)

MIDFIELDERS

6	Mahamadou DIARRA	18.05.81	Real Madrid (Spa)
20	Lassana FANE	11.11.87	Al Merreikh (Sud)
12	Seydou KEITA	16.01.80	Barcelona (Spa)
18	Momo SISSOKO	27.01.85	Juventus (Ita)
4	Samba SOW	29.04.89	Lens (Fra)
14	Abdou TRAORE	17.01.86	Bordeaux (Fra)
15	Bakaye TRAORE	06.03.85	Nancy (Fra)
17	Mahamane TRAORE	31.08.88	Nice (Fra)

FORWARDS

9	Mamadou BAGAYOKO	21.05.79	Nice (Fra)
8	Mamadou DIALLO	17.04.82	Le Havre (Fra)
19	Frederic KANOUTE	02.09.77	Sevilla (Spa)
10	Modibo MAIGA	03.06.86	Le Mans (Fra)
7	Texeira N'DAYE	13.07.81	Nantes (Fra)
11	Mamadou SARAKOLA	01.05.86	Valenciennes (Fra)
21	Mustapha WATABARE	25.01.85	Clermont Foot (Fra)

COACH

Stephen KEshi (Nig)	31.01.62

MOZAMBIQUE

GOALKEEPERS

1	BINO	21.04.82	Liga Muculmana
12	KAMPANGO	14.08.75	Tersana (Egy)
22	LAMA	15.01.85	Ferroviario Maputo

DEFENDERS

21	CAMPIRA	09.04.82	Maxaquene
18	DAUTO NDAN	24.01.84	Al Khartoum (Sud)
13	FANIEL	19.12.82	Liga Muculmana
19	Zainadine JUNIOR	24.06.88	Desportivo de Maputo
23	HELDER	08.08.84	Sporting Lisbon (Por)
16	MIPO	30.04.82	Platinum Stars (SAF)
5	PAITO	05.07.82	Sion (Swi)
4	SIMAO Junior	23.06.88	Panathinaikos (Gre)
15	WINSKEY	06.05.86	Ferroviario de Maputo

MIDFIELDERS

14	DANITO PARRIQUE	05.06.83	Ferroviario de Maputo
7	DOMINGUES	13.11.83	Mamelodi Sundowns (SAF)
2	GENITO	03.06.79	Nea Salamina (Cyp)
20	JOSIMAR	07.08.86	Costa do Sol
6	MANO	20.04.84	ENPPI (Egy)
3	MOHMED HAGY	29.05.85	Ferroviario de Maputo
17	ZE LUIS	24.05.89	Baladeyat El-Mohalla (Egy)

FORWARDS

10	DAVID MONTEIRO	27.02.77	Supersport United (SAF)
8	GONCALVES FUMO	22.06.79	Olympiakos Nicosia (Cyp)
11	HELDER PEDEMBE	20.09.81	Maxaquene
9	TICO-TICO	16.06.73	Jomo Cosmos

COACH

Mart NOOI (Ho)	03.06.54

NIGERIA

GOALKEEPERS

23	Dele AYENIGBA	20.11.83	Beni Yehuda (Isr)
12	Austin EDUE	08.04.84	Hapoel Petah Tikva (Isr)
1	Vincent ENYEAMA	29.08.82	Hapoel Tel Aviv (Isr)

DEFENDERS

22	Onyekachi APAM	30.12.85	Nice (Fra)
21	Uwa ECHIEJILE	20.01.88	Rennes (Fra)
19	Yusuf MOHAMED	05.11.83	Sion (Swi)
5	Obinna NWANERI	18.03.82	Sion (Swi)
17	Chidi ODIAH	11.12.83	CSKA Moscow (Rus)
6	Danny SHITTU	02.08.80	Bolton Wanderers (Eng)
3	Taiwo TAIWO	16.04.85	Marseille (Fra)
2	Joseph YOBO	06.06.80	Everton (Eng)

MIDFIELDERS

20	Dickson ETUHU	06.06.83	Fulham (Eng)
15	Sani KAITA	02.05.86	Aalborg Brondby (Den)
10	John Obi MIKEL	22.04.87	Chelsea (Eng)
14	Seyi OLOFINJANA	30.06.80	Hull City (Eng)
16	Kalu UCHE	15.11.82	Almeria (Spa)
13	Aiyela YUSSUF	04.11.84	Dynamo Kyiv (Ukr)

FORWARDS

4	Mayukwa KANU	01.06.76	Portsmouth (Eng)
9	Obafemi MARTINS	28.10.84	Wolfsburg (Ger)
7	Chinedu OBASI	01.06.86	Hoffenheim (Ger)
18	Victor OBINNA	25.03.87	Malaga (Spa)
11	Peter ODEMWINGIE	15.07.81	Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus)
8	YAKUBU Ayegbeni	22.11.82	Everton (Eng)

COACH

Shaibu AMODU	18.04.58

TOGO (withdrew)

GOALKEEPERS

16	Kossi AGASSA	07.07.76	Istres (Fra)
1	Kodjovi OBILALE	06.10.84	Pantin (Fra)
22	Baba TCHAGOUNI	31.12.90	Dijon (Fra)

DEFENDERS

5	Serge AKAKPO	15.10.87	Vaslui (Rom)
12	Eric AKOTO	20.07.88	Maccabi Haifa (Isr)
2	Vincent BOSSOU	07.02.86	Maranatha
14	Akimola DOUSSAPE	10.03.88	Ittiad El Jadidi
3	Kamlan EKNIFALI	20.11.84	US Monastir (Tun)
13	Richmond FOFOSUN	12.05.80	Thouars (Fra)
6	Abdoul MAMAH	24.08.85	Sherriff Tiraspol (Mol)
23	Assimiou TOURE	01.01.88	Bayer Leverkusen (Ger)

MIDFIELDERS

8	Kwesian AMEWOU	15.12.83	Strømsgodset (Nor)
10	Floyd AYITE	15.12.88	Nancy (Fra)
20	Guillaume BRENNER	10.02.86	Alki Larnaca (Cyp)
17	Serge GAKPE	01.05.87	Monaco (Fra)
19	Sapol IHAKI	05.06.91	Al-Ittihad (Lby)
15	Alaisys ROMAO	18.01.84	Grenoble (Fra)
7	Moustapha SALIFOU	01.08.82	Aston Villa (Eng)
18	Junior SENAYA	19.04.84	Enugu Rangers (Nig)

FORWARDS

4	Emmanuel ADEBAYOR	26.02.84	Manchester City (Eng)
11	Jonathan AYITE	22.07.85	Nimes (Fra)
9	Thomas DOSSEVI	06.03.79	Nantes (Fra)
21	Liybile KPATOUMBI	25.05.86	ASKO Kara

COACH

Hubert VELUD (Fra)	08.06.59

TUNISIA

GOALKEEPERS

22	Farouk BEN MUSTAPHA	01.07.89	CA Bizertin
16	Ayman MATHLOUTHI	14.09.84	Etoile Sahel
1	Adel NEFZI	16.03.74	Club Africain

DEFENDERS

11	Souheil BEN MAHMA	26.08.85	Etoile Sahel
12	Khalil CHEMMAM	24.07.87	Esperance
4	Rathenome FELIX	25.05.84	1860 Munich (Ger)
3	Karim HAGGUI	20.01.84	Hannover (Ger)
21	Eskil FIA	09.03.80	Club Africain
5	Ammar JEMAL	20.04.81	Etoile Sahel
18	Yassin MUSAHI	09.01.90	Sochaux (Fra)
2	Khaled SOUSSI	20.05.85	Club Africain

MIDFIELDERS

7	Chokri BEN SAADA	01.07.84	Nice (Fra)
10	Boujemaa DARRAGI	02.04.81	Esperance
13	Chadi HAMMAMI	14.06.86	CS Sfaxien
8	Khalid KHIRI	16.12.85	Esperance
14	Haithem MRABET	15.10.80	CS Sfaxien
20	Mohamed Ali NAFKHA	25.01.85	Etoile Sahel
6	Rocine RAGUEB	11.02.83	Slavia Prague (Cze)

FORWARDS

22	Ahmed ARAOUDI	23.02.89	Etoile Sahel
9	Amine CHERMITI	26.12.81	Al Ittihad (Sau)
15	Zouheir DHAOUADI	11.01.88	Club Africain
17	Issam JEMAA	20.01.84	Lens (Fra)
19	Youssef MSAKNI	28.10.90	Esperance

COACH

Faouzi BENZARTI	03.01.58

ZAMBIA

GOALKEEPERS

22	Jacob BANDA	11.02.80	ZESCO United
1	Kalilo KAUSHE	01.01.85	Arnautoi (SAF)
16	Kennedy MWECHE	11.12.84	Free State Stars (SAF)

DEFENDERS

3	Dennis BANDA	12.10.89	Green Buffaloes
5	Hijani JUMBONDE	15.06.85	TP Mazembe (DRC)
13	Clovis KAMPAMBA	28.12.80	Free State Stars (SAF)
6	Emmanuel MBOLA	10.05.93	Pyramids (Alm)
4	Joseph MUSONDA	30.05.77	Golden Arrows (SAF)
19	Thomas NYIRENDA	21.01.84	Zanaco
12	Stopira SUNZU	22.06.89	Zanaco

MIDFIELDERS

8	Isaac CHANSA	23.03.84	Helsingborgs (Swe)
14	Noah CHIMATA	25.12.93	Mamelodi United (SAF)
22	Rainford KALABA	14.06.86	Dinan Lorrie (Por)
2	Francis KASONDE	01.08.86	Al Suwaiq (Oma)
11	Christopher KATONGO	11.08.82	Armenia Bielefeld (Ger)
10	Felix KATONGO	18.04.84	Mamelodi Sundowns (SAF)
23	Clifford MULENGA	05.08.87	Mpumalanga BA (SAF)
20	William NDOVU	04.03.87	Hapoel Kiryat Shmona (Isr)

FORWARDS

12	James CHAMANGA	02.07.90	Dalian Shide (Chn)
21	Emmanuel MAYUKA	21.11.90	Maccabi Tel Aviv (Isr)
9	Collins MBESUMA	03.03.84	Moroka Swallows (SAF)
7	Jacob MULENGA	12.02.84	Ittihadi (Ind)
18	Given SINGULUMA	29.08.85	TP Mazembe (DRC)

COACH

Herve RENARD (Fra)	30.09.68

ARGENTINA PRIMERA DIVISION

ARGENTINOS JUNIORS

GOALKEEPERS

12	Gabriel FRANINO	08.11.89
1	Luis DIEBA	21.03.90
22	Nicolas PERIC (Chi)	19.10.76

DEFENDERS

13	Nicolas BERRIOS	26.07.90
6	Ignacio CAMUTO	20.02.86
2	Matias CARUZZO	15.08.84
11	Federico DOMINGUEZ	13.04.74
20	Julian FERNANDEZ	10.07.89
3	Gonzalo PROSPERI	20.09.85
19	Lucas RODRIGUEZ	23.09.93
17	Juan SABIA	17.12.81

MIDFIELDERS

26	Anibal ALARCON	26.11.89
24	German BASUALDO	22.07.80
18	Facundo CORIA	26.05.87
27	Nicolas GIANNI	27.09.82
4	Matias LADA	11.12.91
23	Arturo MENDOZA	02.09.93
8	Juan MERCLER	02.03.80
5	Nestor ORTIGOZA (Par)	07.10.84
21	Santiago RAVIGNANI	03.04.78

FORWARDS

34	Jose Luis CALDERON	24.10.78
22	Emilio HERNANDEZ (Chi)	14.09.84
28	Sebastian SALME	30.01.87
7	Gustavo BOEHMAN	25.03.85
9	Nicolas PARUSCH	14.02.87
15	Andres ROMERO	21.12.89
16	Matias ROTONDI	26.01.92
10	Victor SOSA	10.01.87

COACH

Claudio BORGHI 26.09.64

ARSENAL

GOALKEEPERS

17	Cristian CAMPESTRINI	16.06.80
19	Gabriel ORGELET	10.05.78
1	Ludovico PAVILOCCI	21.06.89

DEFENDERS

22	Cristian ALVAREZ	09.01.78
4	Dario ESPINOLA	15.09.73
6	Anibal MATELLAN	08.05.77
20	Hugo NERVI	06.01.91
5	Franco PEPPINO	16.06.82
3	Matias PEREZ (Uru)	20.07.85
2	Cristian TULA	28.01.78

MIDFIELDERS

30	Nicolas AGUIRRE	27.06.90
14	Leandro ARGUELLO	29.09.90
26	Matias CARABAJAL	03.05.86
33	Nicolas DOMINGO	08.04.85
21	Diego GALVAN	19.03.82
30	Ivan MARCONE	03.06.90
13	Gonzalo MENENDEZ	16.12.92
32	Claudio MOSCA	01.01.91
8	Facundo PEREZ CASTRO	07.08.81
11	Federico PUGGI	10.01.81
22	Sergio SENA	25.08.82
31	Facundo SIGAL	19.01.91
24	Javier VAGAZZI	15.08.79

FORWARDS

10	Jonathan LOPEZ	19.01.89
9	Luciano LEGUIZAMON	01.01.82
27	Mariano MARTINEZ	29.01.79
7	Mauro OBOLO	26.09.81
25	Matias SIERRA	19.02.90
18	Pablo VILLALBA FRETES (Par)	17.03.89

COACH

Jorge BURRUCHAGA 08.10.62

ATLETICO TUCUMAN

GOALKEEPERS

12	Ivan BENEDETTI	01.01.91
23	Esteban DEL ROSSI	14.04.81
1	Lucas ISCHUK	26.04.90

DEFENDERS

6	Juan Manuel AZCONZABAL	08.09.74
17	Denis BARONE (Uru)	12.01.77
4	Andres BRESSAN	12.01.77
16	Rodrigo NERGENA	06.03.89
20	Cesar NUNC	02.07.89
2	Jorge MORALES	12.09.82
29	Ricardo MOREIRA	23.02.83
19	Javier PAEZ	23.09.75
3	Raul SAAVEDRA	08.03.78
18	Matias VILLAVICENCIO	18.09.81

MIDFIELDERS

26	Jonathan BLANES (Uru)	10.01.87
37	David BROCCO	20.01.89
8	Diego EBROZ	21.09.78
21	Matias ESCOBAR	21.01.87
5	Martin GRANERO	11.03.83
35	Sebastian LONGO	27.09.83
11	Cesar MONTIGLIO	30.01.84
14	Damian MUSTO	09.06.87
22	Jose SAAVEDRA	04.08.87
10	Claudio SAPRIA	10.06.75

FORWARDS

24	Fabio ESCOBAR (Par)	14.01.81
9	Emanuel GIGLIOTTI	20.05.87
32	Juan Pablo PEREYRA	30.05.84
7	Luis RODRIGUEZ	01.01.85
30	Claudio VARGAS VILLALBA (Par)	15.12.85

COACH

Osvaldo SOSA 26.01.48

BANFIELD

GOALKEEPERS

29	Enrique BOLOGNA	13.02.82
17	Sebastian LOPEZ	14.09.85
1	Cristian LUCCHETTI	29.06.78

DEFENDERS

4	Julio BARRAZA	04.03.80
6	Marcelo BUSTAMANTE	17.02.89
21	Jose DEVICA (Par)	18.08.82
27	Mauro DOS SANTOS	07.01.89
24	Santiago LADINO	17.01.82
2	Victor LOPEZ	19.12.78
33	Jonatan MADANA	29.07.85
14	Fabio SEGOVIA	12.01.89
15	Pablo VERGARA	15.08.88

MIDFIELDERS

28	Roberto BATTION	01.02.82
5	Maximiliano BUSTOS	05.01.82
10	Walter ERVITI	12.06.80
7	Maximiliano LUGO	17.02.80
30	Julio MARCHANT	01.11.80
23	Emanuel PIO	04.11.88
20	Marcelo QUINTEROS	23.12.76
8	Jairen RODRIGUEZ (Col)	12.07.91
16	Federico SARDELLA	16.04.88

FORWARDS

11	Guido DI VANNI	11.06.80
25	Sebastian FERNANDEZ (Uru)	23.06.85
18	Facundo FERREYRA	17.02.91
12	Cristian GARCIA	29.03.83
32	Ruben RAMIREZ	17.10.82
22	Luis SALMERON	18.03.82

COACH

Julio FALCIONI 20.07.56

BOCA JUNIORS

GOALKEEPERS

1	Roberto ABBONDANZIERI	19.08.72
31	Jesus AVILA	30.05.88
12	Javier GARCIA	29.01.87

DEFENDERS

35	Julio BARROSO	16.01.85
24	Adrian GUIMENO (Uru)	03.02.80
4	Hugo IBARRA	01.04.74
28	Juan KRUPOVIESA	16.04.78
18	Luciano MONZON	13.04.87
3	Claudio MOREL RODRIGUEZ (Par)	02.07.78
6	Emanuel MUNOZ	08.10.90
29	Gabriel PALETTA	15.02.86

MIDFIELDERS

5	Sebastian BATTAGLIA	08.11.68
21	Cristian CHAVEZ	16.05.86
22	Cristian ERBES	06.01.90
28	Nicolas GAITAN	23.07.88
11	Federico INSUA	03.01.88
16	Guillermo MARINO	02.02.81
8	Gary MEDEL (Chi)	03.08.87
34	Jesus MENDEZ	10.01.85
13	Sebastian PREDIGUER	04.09.86
10	Juan Roman RIQUELME	24.06.78
19	Ariel ROSADA	11.04.78

FORWARDS

7	Pablo MIRACHE	11.10.87
14	Ricardo NOIR	26.02.87
9	Martin PALERMO	07.11.73
27	Lucas VIATRI	29.03.87

COACH

Abel ALVES 19.02.50

CHACARITA JUNIORS

GOALKEEPERS

25	Cristian CELAIS	21.04.75
1	Nicolas TAUBER	20.03.80

DEFENDERS

33	Diego CROSA	10.04.76
2	Mariano ECHEVERRIA	27.05.81
4	Fernando FONTANA	22.11.78
15	Cristian GRABINSKY	12.01.80
17	Leandro LOPEZ	01.09.80
35	Jorge MINEZ (Par)	22.01.78

MIDFIELDERS

11	Emanuel CENTURION	25.08.82
7	Alejandro FREZZOTTI	15.02.84
18	Federico INIGUEZ	16.10.85
24	Daniel PEREIRA (Uru)	05.12.76
27	Matias PISANO	13.12.91
6	Sergio PONCE	09.01.84
20	Nicolas RAMIREZ	10.02.88
21	Sebastian SCIORILLI	02.05.89
5	Federico VISMARA	09.05.83
28	Omar ZAHIF	02.09.78

FORWARDS

36	German CANO	02.02.88
19	Diego MORALES	26.11.86
23	Facundo PARDO	15.08.83

COACH

Fernando SANROMA 26.10.70

COLON

GOALKEEPERS

12	Andres BAILO	06.09.88
21	Marcos DIAZ	05.02.86
1	Hugo POZZI	16.02.78

DEFENDERS

3	Salvadano CANDIA (Par)	08.07.83
28	Marc CAIRE	12.07.88
6	Pablo DE MIRANDA	24.02.86
5	Ariel GARCE	14.07.79
33	Marcelo GROX	21.09.75
34	Maximo MANSILLA	24.10.88
2	Jonnar MOSQUERA (Col)	12.01.82
4	Ismael QUILEZ	16.11.89
13	German RIVAROLA	18.04.79

MIDFIELDERS

10	Lucas ACOSTA	26.01.88
23	Mauro BOLLONE	03.07.90
18	Facundo BERTOLLO	20.05.90
22	Alejandro CAPURRO	21.10.80
8	Eduardo COUPET	12.09.74
11	Ricardo GOMEZ	23.10.81
16	Ivan MOFENO Y FABIANESI (Spa)	04.06.79
7	Cristian PELLEGRINO	01.02.82
29	Alfredo RAMIREZ	28.10.84
24	Facundo SANCHEZ	07.03.90
17	Santiago SOTO	07.05.90
19	Nicolas TORRES	10.10.83

FORWARDS

32	Jonatan BAUMAN	20.03.91
26	Rodrigo CAMPIO	16.09.89
20	Esteban FIORITES	26.12.78
14	Juan Manuel LUCERO	26.05.83
9	Federico MEYO	26.08.83
35	Andres RIOS	21.02.83

COACH

Antonio MOHAMED 07.04.70

ESTUDIANTES

GOALKEEPERS

25	Damian ALDIS	09.12.79
1	Roberto FERNANDEZ (Par)	29.03.88
21	Agustin ORION	26.06.81
12	Cesar TABARINA	21.07.83

DEFENDERS

14	Marcos ANGUELERI	07.04.83
3	Cristian CELLAY	09.05.81
2	Leandro DESABATO	24.01.78
19	Federico FERNANDEZ	21.02.89
4	Raul IBERIA	25.12.89
16	German PEE	02.11.81
30	Clemente RODRIGUEZ	03.07.81
6	Marcos PINTO	20.03.90
20	Matias SARAVIA	23.01.89

MIDFIELDERS

23	Leandro BENITEZ	30.07.83
29	Roberto BURGE	15.01.89
22	Rodrigo BRANA	07.03.79
10	Marcelo CARRUSCA	01.09.83
26	Cristian GAITAN	15.01.90
11	Juan Sebastian VERON	09.03.75
13	Michael REYES (USA)	02.06.91
24	Leonardo JARA	20.05.91
18	Maximiliano NUNEZ	17.09.86
8	Enzo PEREZ	22.02.83
5	Matias SANCHEZ	10.06.87

FORWARDS

17	Mauro BOSELLI	22.05.85
30	Leandro GONZALEZ	14.10.85
27	Jeronimo NEUMANN	03.06.86
7	Jose SOSA	19.06.85

COACH

Alejandro SABELLA 05.11.54

GIMNASIA LA PLATA

GOALKEEPERS

12	Pablo BANSAPIANO	09.01.85
23	Fernando MONETTI	21.02.89
1	Gaston SESSA	15.04.73

DEFENDERS

6	Ariel AGUERO	16.02.80
13	Raul ALBORNOZ	20.03.89
32	Mauro CARLI	19.10.85
3	Patricio GRAFF	18.11.75
14	Hugo IRIANTE	20.03.82
29	Ruben MALDONADO (Par)	25.04.79
4	Alvaro OPRICHO (Chi)	04.04.79

MIDFIELDERS

8	Luciano ABEDI	01.03.87
15	Milton CASCO	11.04.80
16	Lucas GASTRO	09.04.89
25	Hernan ENCINA	03.11.82
19	Esteban GONZALEZ	15.08.78
10	Mariano MESSERA	23.02.78
26	Boris MILOC	16.10.90
21	Fabian RIMBADI	08.05.87
31	Israel RIOJAN	08.10.90
37	Sebastian ROMERO	24.07.78
11	Diego VILLAR	25.04.82

FORWARDS

20	Gaston CASAS	10.01.78
7	Juan CUEVAS	04.04.80
23	Hector MARTINENA	22.01.87
30	Juan NEIRA	28.03.86
30	Marco PEREZ (Col)	19.09.90
9	Roberto SOSA	24.01.75
22	Denis STRAGOVITSCH	20.10.87
18	Jose VIZCARRA	08.06.84

COACH

Diego COCCA 02.11.72

GODOY CRUZ

GOALKEEPERS

12	Cristian ARAGONA	06.02.87
1	Nelson IRAMEZ	13.01.81
22	Jose RAMIREZ	03.02.77
31	Sebastian TORRICO	22.02.88

DEFENDERS

25	Cristian CIEVAS	20.03.88
26	Jorge CERDELO (Uru)	21.12.81
15	Francisco DATIRI	03.03.88
6	Gustavo FORNICA	27.01.86
21	Zelmar GARCIA	02.02.87
14	Sebastian MARTINEZ (Uru)	11.04.83
23	Ariel ROJAS	16.01.86
2	Leonardo SIGALI	29.05.87
32	Dario SALOMON	04.10.83
29	Nicolas TRIVIGNO	17.02.89

MIDFIELDERS

19	Martin AGUIRRE	14.09.81
27	Alejandro CAMARGO	12.06.88
5	Nicolas BUMEDIN	10.03.83
4	Carlos SANCHEZ (Uru)	02.12.84
34	Sergio SANCHEZ	03.01.83
3	David RAMIREZ	16.02.81
20	Leandro TORRES	04.11.88
17	Federico VILLEGAS	15.09.81

FORWARDS

28	Maximiliano ALAVEZ	01.05.90
11	Cesar CARRANZA	16.08.88
18	Juan CASTILLO (Col)	17.11.77
10	Cristian CHAVEZ	04.06.67
7	Federico INGRAIN	25.10.84
24	Rodrigo SALINAS	04.07.86
9	Daniel VEGA	10.09.81
16	Jesus VERA	10.01.88

COACH

Oscar ASAD 09.04.71

SQUADS 2009-10 CLAUSURA

HURACAN

GOALKEEPERS

12	Lucas GALVAN	08.11.84
22	Gaston MONZON	13.06.87
1	Cesar VALLEJOS	24.02.83

DEFENDERS

15	Kevin COIRA	03.05.90
25	Eduardo DOMINGUEZ	01.09.76
6	Ezequiel FILIPETTO	08.12.87
21	Gonzalo GARCIA	06.02.81
2	Pablo GOETZ	12.06.85
4	Pablo IEREZ	26.07.83
3	Diego RODRIGUEZ (Uru)	08.06.86

MIDFIELDERS

14	Juan Carlos CARRIZO	03.06.87
13	Franco CRIVELI	08.04.91
8	Leandro DIAZ	26.06.86
5	Gaston ESMERADO	08.02.78
20	Francisco HERNANDEZ	14.06.89
17	Gaston MACHIN	23.02.83
11	Adrian PEPALTA	08.05.82
10	Alan SANCHEZ	23.11.85
18	Patricio TORANZO	19.03.82

FORWARDS

19	Leandro BENEGAS	27.11.88
26	Julian BOTTARO	28.09.92
27	Gino CLARA	26.05.88
7	Andres FRAUZIUK	21.10.85
9	Gustavo GALVORON	06.09.77
23	Federico NETO	19.01.91
26	Federico ORTIZ	07.06.89

COACH

Hector RIVEIRA	10.04.50	

INDEPENDIENTE

GOALKEEPERS

12	Adrian GABBARINI	10.10.85
1	Hilario NAVARRO	14.11.80
21	Diego RODRIGUEZ	25.06.89

DEFENDERS

26	Samuel CASERES (Par)	20.03.89
27	Leonel GALEANO	02.08.91
14	Lucas KRUSPZKY	06.04.92
3	Lucas MAREDINE	13.01.83
25	Carlos MATHEU	12.05.83
13	Juan SANCHEZ	13.05.91
6	Eduardo TIZZIO	31.07.74
2	Julian VELAZQUEZ	22.10.90
4	Luciano VELLA	14.03.81

MIDFIELDERS

5	Walter ACEVEDO	18.02.85
7	Walter BUSSE	09.03.87
8	Hernan FREDES	27.03.87
15	Fernando GUDOY	01.05.90
23	Leandro GRACIAN	06.08.82
18	Mariano HERNON	24.02.78
26	Federico MARCHELLO	26.03.89
22	Ignacio PIATTI	04.02.65
10	Patricio RODRIGUEZ	04.05.90
29	Sergio VITTORI	09.06.89

FORWARDS

30	Andres CHAVEZ	07.12.83
20	Martin GOMEZ	25.01.89
17	Federico GONZALEZ	01.06.87
9	Leonel NUNEZ	12.10.84
11	Nestor SILVERA	14.03.77

COACH

Americo GALLEGO	25.04.55	

LANUS

GOALKEEPERS

13	Esteban ANDRADA	26.01.91
16	Mauricio CARANTA	31.07.78
1	Agustin MARCHESIN	14.08.88

DEFENDERS

25	Carlos ARCE	04.02.86
22	Rodrigo ERPAMOSPE	03.05.90
20	Emir FACCIOLI	05.08.89
4	Hernan GRANA	17.04.85
17	Santiago HOYOS	03.06.82
36	Hernan LOPEZ	29.03.91
34	Maximiliano LUGO	04.12.88
2	Carlos QUINTANA	11.02.88
6	Juliano VIERA (Bra)	04.08.81
3	Maximiliano VELAZQUEZ	12.09.80

MIDFIELDERS

21	Marcos AGUIRRE	30.03.84
5	Sebastian BLANCO	15.03.88
8	Matias FRITZLER	23.08.86
32	Diego GONZALEZ	09.02.86
12	Eduardo LEDESMA (Par)	07.06.85
6	Agustin PELLETIERI	17.05.82
19	Guido PIZARRO	26.02.90
15	Mario ZANINOVIC	20.03.87

FORWARDS

26	Eric APARICIO	25.01.90
28	Javier ARIAS	09.03.89
18	Diego BEDOIMEDIZ	04.01.91
11	Gonzalo CASTILLEJOS	05.03.86
27	Leandro DIAZ	06.06.92
24	Roberto DIVETTA	24.04.88
9	Cristian MENENDEZ	02.04.88
7	Diego LAGOS	05.03.86
14	Santiago SALCEDO (Par)	05.09.82

COACH

Luis ZUBELDIA	13.01.61	

NEWELL'S OLD BOYS

GOALKEEPERS

1	Nahuel GUZMAN	10.03.86
12	Lucas HOYOS	23.04.88
22	Sebastian PERATTA	01.11.86

DEFENDERS

4	Agustin ALAMES	22.07.78
24	Leandro DEMITEZ	05.03.87
29	Juan Manuel INSAURALDE	03.10.84
2	Alvaro MACHUCA	10.05.90
3	Juan QUIROGA	20.05.82
15	Carlos RUSELLI	14.08.85
6	Rolando SCHIAVI	18.01.73

MIDFIELDERS

19	Hugo BARRIENTOS	03.01.77
7	Lucas BERNARDI	21.06.77
28	Alejandro CASCIO	23.06.88
8	Pablo Franco DOLCI	01.01.84
16	Marcelo ESTIGARRIBIA (Par)	21.09.81
10	Mauro FORNICA	03.04.84
5	Diego MATEO	01.08.78
16	Cristian SANCHEZ PROTTE	10.05.85
14	Mauricio SPERDUTTI	16.02.86
21	Leonel VANGIONI	05.05.87
33	Raul VILLALBA	30.11.89
21	Hernan ZANNI	17.10.87

FORWARDS

11	Jorge AEMOCARRO (Par)	06.11.81
20	Joaquin BOSROSSIAN (Uru)	19.06.87
31	Fernando BERNIS	04.07.88
25	Federico FALCONE	21.32.90
9	Cristian NUNEZ	02.08.80
11	Diego TORRES	03.07.82

COACH

Roberto SENSINI	12.10.66	

RACING CLUB

GOALKEEPERS

12	Mauro BOBLER	03.01.83
4	Jose Martinez GUILLOTTA	12.01.84
1	Pablo SANTILLO	07.03.90

DEFENDERS

6	Lucas AVELLANO	19.07.85
2	Roberto VIOLA	14.04.73
28	Marcos CACERES (Par)	05.05.86
27	Matias CERNIS	24.12.81
24	Damian LEDESMA	21.05.82
23	Brian LUPI	25.04.89
34	Matias MARTINEZ	24.03.88
32	Gabriel MERCADO	18.03.87
3	Nicolas SAINZ	16.06.89
17	Cristian TARIO	22.09.79

MIDFIELDERS

14	Marcos ORTIZ DIEDA	22.05.86
31	Luis FARINA	28.04.91
11	Sebastian GRAZZINI	25.01.81
10	Gabriel MAROTTO	27.11.86
18	Adrian LUCERO	16.06.84
29	Gonzalo PEREZ	24.04.90
25	Sebastian ROSARIO (Uru)	25.05.87
8	Martin WAGNER	19.09.85
5	Claudio VACCA	18.07.87

FORWARDS

16	Claudio ACOSTA	01.03.84
9	Pablo CABALLERO	21.07.86
35	Ignacio COLOMBONI	12.05.92
7	Pablo LUGUERCIO	19.03.82
32	Santiago MALANO	29.01.87
15	Juan SANCHEZ SUTELO	02.10.87
19	Damian STEINERT	25.02.86
30	Valentin VIOLA	28.08.91

COACH

Claudio VIVAS	12.06.60	

RIVER PLATE

GOALKEEPERS

27	Nicolas HAMPPA	25.03.85
12	Juan UJEDA	11.10.82
1	Mario VEGA	01.06.84

DEFENDERS

24	Gustavo CARDAI	14.10.85
16	Maximiliano CORONEL	28.04.89
13	Juan Manuel DIAZ (Uru)	28.10.87
4	Paulo FERRARI	04.01.82
2	Alexis FERRERO	31.03.79
36	Lucas IRVAN	03.02.89
23	German PEZZELLA	27.06.91
21	Facundo QUIROGA	18.01.78
6	Nicolas SANCHEZ	04.07.86
3	Cristian VILLAGRA	27.12.85
32	Gaston VILLAFAÑA	22.01.90

MIDFIELDERS

5	Oscar ARONIBA	21.08.82
29	Matias ALMEYDA	21.12.73
19	Diego BARRADO	27.02.81
22	Gustavo BOU	18.02.90
30	Diego BUONANOTTE	19.04.89
29	Mauro DIAZ	10.03.91
11	Marcelo GALLARDO	18.01.76
21	Martin GALMARINI	24.02.88
8	Rodrigo PIMAS (Par)	09.04.86

FORWARDS

18	Gustavo CANALES	30.03.82
33	Gustavo FERNANDEZ	04.08.90
9	Rogelio FUNES MORI	05.03.91
28	Gonzalo LUDUENA	12.03.86
10	Ariel ORTEGA	04.03.74
17	Andres RIOS	04.01.89
7	Mauro ROSALES	24.02.81

COACH

Leonardo ASTRADA	06.01.70	

ROSARIO CENTRAL

GOALKEEPERS

25	Jorge BAN (Uru)	02.06.81
1	Jorge BROWN	26.05.85
12	Hernan GALINDEZ	03.07.87
22	Manuel GARCIA	04.07.88

DEFENDERS

30	Vicente ARMONI (Par)	14.10.80
6	Diego BRAGHIERI	23.02.87
24	Ignacio BUGGINO	22.02.86
3	Guillermo BURGOS	24.04.80
34	Cristian CAFFARO ROSSO	18.05.88
8	Diego CHITZOFF	04.04.83
4	Kleber DANELON	06.01.86
26	Santiago GARCIA	08.07.88
2	Nahuel VALENTINI	19.06.83
13	Mario VALLEJO	18.07.87

MIDFIELDERS

18	Martin ASTUDILLO	13.01.77
20	Matias BALLINI	18.12.88
33	Horacio CALCATERRA	22.02.89
10	Jonathan GOMEZ	21.12.89
15	Lucas MOYA	01.02.87
11	Gervasio NUNEZ	29.01.88
23	Ramon OCAMPO	21.06.83
29	Mario PASQUALINGA	28.10.83
31	Martin RIVERO	13.11.89
26	Milton ZAPATE	05.08.88

FORWARDS

17	Milton CABALLO	01.12.88
32	Adrian DE LEON	12.05.80
9	Luciano FIGUEROA	19.05.91
19	Emilio ZELAYA	30.07.87

COACH

Ariel CUFFARO RUSSO	18.06.63	

SAN LORENZO

GOALKEEPERS

1	Gustavo CAMPAGNUOLO	27.06.72
12	Nerio CHAMPAGNE	20.01.85
98	Pablo MIGLIORE	27.01.82

DEFENDERS

28	Gaston AGUIRRE	11.11.81
21	Nelson BENITEZ	24.05.84
26	Miguel BERTOCCHI	09.06.80
6	Jonathan BATTINELLI	11.09.84
13	Fernando MEZA	21.02.90
21	Jose PALOMINO	05.01.90
21	Pablo PINTOS (Uru)	01.07.87
11	Anderson TORRES (Par)	15.06.82
3	German VIDORIA	05.05.87

MIDFIELDERS

28	Gonzalo BAZAN	05.05.88
5	Nily GONZALEZ	04.08.74
33	Sebastian GONZALEZ	04.03.92
30	Ariel IBARCE	29.07.90
16	Cristian LEIVA	25.09.77
25	Santiago PRIM	11.05.90
22	Salvador REYNOSO	12.10.87
8	Diego RIVERO	11.08.81
10	Leandro ROMAGNOLI	17.02.81
32	Sebastian RUSSILLERO	20.04.85
17	Juan TORRES	20.06.85

FORWARDS

32	Emiliano ALFARO (Uru)	20.04.88
14	Fabian BARBARAN	15.02.81
19	Alejandro GIMEZ	15.02.88
4	Sebastian LUNA	29.12.87
7	Juan MENSEGUEZ	04.06.87
9	Bernardo ROMEO	19.09.77

COACH

Diego SIMEONE	24.04.70	

TIGRE

GOALKEEPERS

21	Lucas ABUD	08.03.86
12	Luis ARDENTE	17.09.81
1	Daniel ISLAS	19.02.79

DEFENDERS

13	Alberto ALARCON	31.08.86
6	Rodolfo ARRUABARRENA	20.07.75
30	Carlos FONDACARO	21.05.87
29	Pablo FONTANELLO	26.09.84
24	Juan GARAT	19.04.83
2	Damian LEYES	14.01.86
33	Maximiliano OLIVA	04.03.90
23	Norberto PAPARATTO	14.03.84
21	Claudio PEREZ	26.12.85
26	Walter SANCHEZ	19.10.69
4	Jose SAN ROMAN	17.07.68

MIDFIELDERS

15	Nestor AYALA (Par)	18.02.83
8	Jonathan BLANCO	24.04.87
11	Ruben BOTTA	31.01.80
5	Diego CASTANO	08.06.79
27	Gonzalo CABRY (Mex)	10.11.81
11	Ramiro LEONE	01.06.77
28	Juan MALDONADO	06.11.89
18	Martin MOREL	05.11.88
16	Lucas OVIEDO	19.04.85
20	Mariano PASINI	19.10.76
18	Ribair RODRIGUEZ (Uru)	04.10.87

FORWARDS

14	Gerardo CASTRO	05.01.88
9	Leandro LAZZARO	08.03.74
7	Carlos LUNA	17.01.82
22	Facundo PUMPIDO	21.10.86
32	Brian RODRIGUEZ (Uru)	14.08.86

COACH

Ricardo GAROLO LAMBARTI	10.02.62	

VELEZ SARSFIELD

GOALKEEPERS

1	Marcelo BARNERON	16.02.84
12	Ezequiel CARAGE	17.01.84
25	German MONTOYA	23.01.83

DEFENDERS

28	Mariano BITTOLO	24.04.90
4	Gaston DIAZ	13.03.88
6	Sebastian DOMINGUEZ	29.07.80
13	Pablo LIMA (Uru)	22.03.81
19	Nicolas OTAMENDI	12.02.88
3	Emiliano PAPA	19.04.82
15	Fernando TOBIO	16.10.89
2	Marco TOUSSALIEH	12.01.88

MIDFIELDERS

29	Ricardo ALVAREZ	12.04.88
24	Juan BELLA	13.09.89
27	Alejandro CABRAL	11.09.87
8	Nicolas CARRERA	05.06.84
26	Luciano CIGNO	29.02.88
14	Leandro CORONEL	10.02.86
5	Fabian CUBERO	21.12.78
10	Mauro MOSALEZ	27.02.87
17	Franco RAZZOTTI	06.02.85
32	Javier ROBLES	18.01.85
18	Leandro SOMOZA	26.01.81
22	Leandro VELAZQUEZ	10.05.89
16	Victor ZAPATA	20.01.79

FORWARDS

20	Leandro CARUSO	14.07.81
21	Jonathan CRISTALDO	06.03.89
9	Ricardo LOPEZ (Uru)	21.01.78
7	Juan MARTINEZ	20.10.85
23	Santiago SILVA (Uru)	09.12.88
11	Rolando ZAPATE	06.03.78

COACH

Ricardo GAREGA	18.07.58	

Famous Last Words

Who said what and why

"I can't disagree with his decision on Tevez"

Manchester United's Gary Neville backs manager Alex Ferguson over letting Carlos Tevez leave Old Trafford and join Manchester City in the summer

"Neville is a retard and a sock-sucker"

Tevez, on the other hand, doesn't

Sock it to him...Neville (left) and Tevez exchange pleasantries

"A first half worthy of the Museo delle Cere [the Italian version of the Madame Tussaud waxwork gallery]. One of the great absentees"

Gazzetta dello Sport singles out David Beckham after a lifeless display in Milan's 2-0 derby day loss to Internazionale

"People are now talking more about my game than my hair. They must have got used to my hairstyle"

Everton and Belgium midfielder Marouane Fellaini admits his 1970s-style Afro may have got in the way of more recognition as a footballer

Hair apparent...Fellaini

"Mancini is certainly cooler than him across the road. He looks like a binman"

Oasis singer and Manchester City fan Liam Gallagher prefers the sartorial elegance of his club's manager, Roberto Mancini, to the old overcoat of Sir Alex Ferguson

"Players can no longer assume that a contract extension means more money"

Bayern Munich's new director of sport, Christian Nerlinger, insists the blank-cheque days are over at Germany's richest club

"I'm heartily tired of hearing all the time that we are the best team in Africa. We've won what?"

The Ivory Coast's hard-nosed coach Vahid Halilhodzic strikes a much-needed note of realism

"Arms are going to continue to speak"

Rodrigues Mingas, the spokesman of the Angolan separatists who attacked the Togo team bus on the eve of the African Nations Cup, promises more barbaric acts

"I completely understand their reaction. It was a human thing to do. I think they would have stayed if CAF had been more supportive instead of criticising them for taking a coach rather than a plane"

Former Cameroon goalkeeper Joseph-Antoine Bell claims the African football authorities mishandled the fall-out from the Cabinda murder spree

"If you let video technology in, it's the death of football"

UEFA chief Michel Platini refuses to go digital, arguing that decision making on the pitch must stay human

"I'm hearing God ask me to help people"

Hamburg's veteran Brazil midfielder Ze Roberto reveals he intends to become a pastor at the end of his pro career

God's squad...Ze Roberto's planned transfer

"It happens to many players at many different grounds"

Internazionale coach Jose Mourinho surprisingly plays down the racist chants aimed at his striker Mario Balotelli by Chievo fans

"He's probably the best player I've ever played against"

Manchester United's Wayne Rooney on Milan's Clarence Seedorf

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ITALY

IVORY COAST

DENMARK

by Jim Holden

Surprise winners

Few fancied the Danes to get through their qualifying group

No way through...Denmark keep out Sweden's Daniel Majstorovic (on ground) in Stockholm

HAVING BEEN expected to be makeweights in a qualifying group that contained the superstars of Portugal and the tough guys of Sweden, the least considered and least experienced Denmark team for 30 years enjoyed a string of famous victories that confounded pundits and supporters alike.

The campaign began miserably, with a dull-as-ditchwater 0-0 draw away to Hungary, but then sprang into exultant life with a 3-2 triumph away to group favourites Portugal. This was a classic sporting robbery, with Denmark 2-1 down with two minutes remaining, before Christian Poulsen struck an equaliser and Daniel Jensen scored a breakaway winner deep into stoppage time.

The result changed the Danes' mood and ambition, and a succession of easy 3-0 wins – home and away to minnows Malta, and at home to Albania – allowed them to travel with confidence for the visit to neighbours Sweden. The historic rivalry has usually favoured the Swedes, but this time uncomplimentary words in the build-up from Zlatan Ibrahimovic helped to inspire a crucial 1-0 win with a goal from Thomas Kahlenberg. Goalkeeper Thomas Sorensen also saved a penalty in a display that typified the team spirit of a side without stars.

Suddenly, Denmark were miles ahead in the group with home matches to come. Inevitably, perhaps, there was a stutter. Despite dominating at home against Portugal, and leading for most of the game thanks to a Nicklas Bendtner goal, they allowed the visitors a late equaliser. Victory in the next match in Albania would have guaranteed qualification, but again they squandered a lead to draw 1-1.

> **The least considered and least experienced Denmark team for 30 years enjoyed a string of famous victories**

That meant everything rested on a nerve-racking home game against Sweden, who knew that victory would almost certainly mean automatic qualification for them instead. It was a tough, tight match at the Parken Stadium in Copenhagen, won by a late goal from midfielder Jakob Poulsen of Aarhus.

The fact that a player from the Danish Superliga was at the heart of the triumph illustrated the lack of big names in the team and the improving quality of the domestic competition.

There was little sweeter for Danish supporters and the long-serving coach, Morten Olsen, than to secure qualification for the World Cup by beating Sweden and effectively knocking their fierce rivals out of the finals as well. Even a final 1-0 defeat at home to Hungary could not sour the delight. ●

For the record

QUALIFYING RESULTS
EUROPE GROUP 1

06.09.08	Hungary-Denmark	0-0
10.09.08	Portugal-Denmark	2-3
11.10.08	Denmark-Malta	3-0
28.03.09	Malta-Denmark	0-3
01.04.09	Denmark-Albania	3-0
06.06.09	Sweden-Denmark	0-1
05.09.09	Denmark-Portugal	1-1
09.09.09	Albania-Denmark	1-1
10.10.09	Denmark-Sweden	1-0
14.10.09	Denmark-Hungary	0-1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Denmark (Q)	10	6	3	1	16	5	21
Portugal (P)	10	5	4	1	17	5	19
Sweden	10	5	3	2	13	5	18
Hungary	10	5	1	4	10	8	16
Albania	10	1	4	5	6	13	7
Malta	10	0	1	9	0	26	1

PLAYERS USED IN QUALIFIERS
TEN GAMES
Christian POULSEN (882 mins), Dennis ROMMEDAHL (862 mins)
NINE
Lars JACOBSEN (766 mins), Nicklas BENDTNER (706 mins)
EIGHT
Daniel AGGER (720 mins)
SEVEN
Thomas SORENSEN (630 mins)
SIX
Jon Dahl TOMASSON (474 mins), Jakob POULSEN (455 mins), Daniel JENSEN (386 mins), Martin JORGENSEN (368 mins)
FIVE
Soren LARSEN (308 mins)
FOUR
Michael JAKOBSEN (360 mins), Simon KJAER (360 mins), Michael SILBERBAUER (173 mins), Jonas BORRING (127 mins)
THREE
Stephan ANDERSEN (270 mins), Martin LAURSEN (270 mins), Anders MOLLER CHRISTENSEN (270 mins), Thomas KAHLENBERG (240 mins), Leon ANDREASEN (205 mins), William KVIST (204 mins), Jesper GRONKJAER (73 mins)
TWO
Morten NORDSTRAND (98 mins), Hjalte NORREGAARD (50 mins), Martin BERNBURG (9 mins)
ONE
Kasper BOGELUND (90 mins), Per KROLDRUP (90 mins), Christopher POULSEN (90 mins), Thomas RASMUSSEN (90 mins), Peter LOVENKRANDS (72 mins), Martin VINGAARD (61 mins), Thomas ENEVOLDSEN (46 mins), Michael KROHN-DEHLI (30 mins), Martin RETOV (22 mins), Thomas AUGUSTINUSSEN (18 mins), Morten RASMUSSEN (14 mins), Thomas KRISTENSEN (8 mins), Marc NYGAARD (3 mins)

SCORERS IN QUALIFIERS
FIVE GOALS
Soren LARSEN
THREE
Nicklas BENDTNER
TWO
Christian POULSEN
ONE
Daniel AGGER, Leon ANDREASEN, Daniel JENSEN, Thomas KAHLENBERG, Morten NORDSTRAND, Jakob POULSEN

William HILL 125/1 to win World Cup 9/2 to win Group E

The key men

Experienced...Olsen

Morten Olsen
One of the longest-serving international managers, with 10 years experience as boss and 102 caps as a player. Recently signed up for two more years.

Simon Kjaer
One of the most sought-after young defenders in Europe after his starring role for Denmark in the qualifiers and with Palermo in Serie A.

Wanted...Kjaer

Hard...Poulsen

Daniel Agger
Classy, ball-playing central defender in the Morten Olsen mould, whose partnership with Kjaer has made Denmark so tough to beat.

Nicklas Bendtner
Scored home and away against Portugal in the qualifiers and oozes far more confidence playing for Denmark than he does at Arsenal.

Christian Poulsen
Hard-running and hard-tackling central midfielder from Juventus who brings strength and vast experience to the side.

Confident...Bendtner

The unanswered questions

Barren patch...Tomasson

Can Jon Dahl Tomasson regain his goal touch?
Scorer of 51 international goals in 107 games for Denmark, he didn't score in qualifying and hasn't found the net for his country since February 2008.

Will the veteran wingers be a force at the World Cup?
Martin Jorgensen, Jesper Gronkjaer and Dennis Rommedahl have all been fine players at their peak, but can Denmark rely on them in South Africa?

How would they cope without Nicklas Bendtner in attack?
The Arsenal forward is the only true international class striker at coach Olsen's disposal right now. Losing him would be a major blow.

Reasons to be cheerful

Remarkable togetherness
There will be few nations at the World Cup finals that have more team spirit than a Denmark squad who would run through brick walls for each other.

Spirit...victory over Sweden

Stability at the top
News that Olsen has signed a new two-year contract removes a potentially unsettling factor.

Defensive quality
Simon Kjaer and Daniel Agger have forged a brilliant partnership at the back, and both can play a bit too.

Reasons to be fearful

Weakish squad
Olsen's first-choice team have dynamism and a fine understanding, but there is a lack of genuine quality among the reserves.

Lack of goals
The Danes find it hard to score against the best teams.

Opening match
Playing the first group game against top seeds Holland could make or break their campaign.

ENGLAND

by Gavin Hamilton

The Capello effect

The Italian coach has transformed a demoralised side into heavily-backed contenders

High hopes...Crouch (No9) causes big problems for Andorra in qualifying

IN NOVEMBER 2007, a humiliating 3-2 defeat by Croatia at Wembley put paid to England's hopes of qualifying for Euro 2008 and ended Steve McClaren's tenure as England coach. Less than two years later, the teams met again at Wembley. The result, an emphatic 5-1 victory for England, sealed qualification for the 2010 World Cup with two games to spare.

In 22 months so much had changed, even though so much had stayed the same.

The key players remain. John Terry, Rio Ferdinand and Ashley Cole form the bedrock of a defence that contributed to the best goal difference (plus 28) of any team in the 2010 qualifiers, while the midfield of Steven Gerrard, Frank Lampard and Gareth Barry have found a way to work together to provide a platform for the creative talents of Wayne Rooney in attack.

The difference, of course, has been Fabio Capello.

The Italian has overhauled a set-up that had become too cosy. Under Capello, no player is assured of their place – witness David Beckham's pursuit of a record 126th England cap from the substitutes' bench.

Capello has introduced a new sense of discipline – mobile phones at the dinner table are out, blazers are in – and that has been reflected in the results.

In the opening qualifier, substitute Joe Cole spared English blushes with two second-half goals against Andorra in Barcelona, but that was followed four days later by the result of the campaign: a 4-1 victory over Croatia in Zagreb, where Theo Walcott scored a brilliant hat-trick.

Kazakhstan were eventually brushed aside 5-1 at Wembley after a tepid first half, while a 3-1 win in Belarus established a five-point lead over closest challengers Croatia. It was a position from which England never looked back.

> **Capello has introduced a new sense of discipline and that has been reflected in the results**

Ukraine gave Capello's men their sternest test at Wembley, where Andriy Shevchenko's second-half equaliser looked to have secured a draw before Terry snatched a late winner with a header from Beckham's free-kick.

Wins over Kazakhstan and Andorra then set up the home game with Croatia, who were dispatched with relative ease and qualification secured.

Capello has built his team around Rooney, forced Lampard and Gerrard to play together in midfield and used the unfashionable Emile Heskey as the steel to Rooney's silk.

The Terry affair – tabloid revelations prompted Capello to strip the Chelsea defender of the captaincy – could yet destabilise the England bandwagon. But on the strength of their qualifying campaign, England will be one of the favourites in South Africa. ●

For the record

QUALIFYING CAMPAIGN
EUROPE GROUP 6

06.09.08	Andorra-England	0-2
10.09.08	Croatia-England	1-4
11.10.08	England-Kazakhstan	5-1
15.10.08	Belarus-England	1-3
01.04.09	England-Ukraine	2-1
06.06.09	Kazakhstan-England	0-4
10.06.09	England-Andorra	6-0
09.09.09	England-Croatia	5-1
10.10.09	Ukraine-England	1-0
14.10.09	England-Belarus	3-0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
England (Q)	10	9	0	1	34	6	27
Ukraine (P)	10	6	3	1	21	6	21
Croatia	10	6	2	2	19	13	20
Belarus	10	4	1	5	16	14	13
Kazakhstan	10	2	0	8	11	29	6
Andorra	10	0	0	10	3	38	0

PLAYERS USED IN QUALIFIERS
TEN GAMES
Frank LAMPARD (890 mins)
NINE
Wayne ROONEY (760 mins), David BECKHAM (207 mins)
EIGHT
John TERRY (719 mins), Ashley COLE (694 mins), Gareth BARRY (676 mins)
SEVEN
Glen JOHNSON (615 mins), Steven GERRARD (533 mins), Emile HESKEY (505 mins)
SIX
Rio FERDINAND (538 mins), David JAMES (528 mins), Theo WALCOTT (458 mins)
FIVE
Matthew UPSON (361 mins), Shaun WRIGHT-PHILLIPS (211 mins), Jermain DEFOE (135 mins)
FOUR
Robert GREEN (282 mins), Peter CROUCH (279 mins), Aaron LENNON (208 mins)
THREE
Wes BROWN (270 mins), Wayne BRIDGE (194 mins), James MILNER (65 mins)
TWO
Joleon LESCOTT (180 mins), Joe COLE (99 mins), Carlton COLE (42 mins)
ONE
Michael CARRICK (90 mins), Ben FOSTER (90 mins), Gabriel AGBONLAHOR (66 mins), Stewart DOWNING (46 mins), Ashley YOUNG (44 mins), Jermaine JENAS (35 mins), Phil JAGIELKA (2 mins)

SCORERS IN QUALIFIERS
NINE GOALS
Wayne ROONEY
FOUR
Peter CROUCH, Frank LAMPARD
THREE
Jermain DEFOE, Steven GERRARD, Theo WALCOTT
TWO
Joe COLE
ONE
Gareth BARRY, Rio FERDINAND, Emile HESKEY, John TERRY, Shaun WRIGHT-PHILLIPS (plus one own goal)

William HILL 5/1 to win the World Cup 7/2 to exit at quarter-final stage

The key men

Wayne Rooney
Fabio Capello has built the England side around the Manchester United forward, who loves to drop deep and bring other players into attack. Fatherhood has helped Rooney to grow up fast in recent months. Only 24 but already has 57 caps and 25 goals.

Vital...Rooney

Threat...Gerrard

Steven Gerrard
The Liverpool captain is a goalscoring threat from midfield, where he often starts on the left, solving a long-standing tactical problem.

John Terry
It remains to be seen how the revelations about Terry's private life will affect team morale – and relations with team-mate Wayne Bridge in particular – but the former captain is still the crucial defensive figure.

Frank Lampard
The Chelsea midfielder scored six times for England last year as Capello ignored the theory that Lampard and Gerrard could not be incorporated into the same team.

Respect...Capello

Fabio Capello
The Italian is a dignified presence on the touchline, overseeing charges who understand what he wants and fear the consequences if they fail to deliver. Under contract until 2012 but will he want to stay on for the European Championship?

The unanswered questions

Out of favour...Owen

Will Capello gamble on Michael Owen?
The coach is not a fan of the Manchester United striker but every goal he scores will reinforce his case.

Is there time for Owen Hargreaves to prove his fitness?
The versatile midfielder could be parachuted into the starting line-up – as long as he can stay fit.

Will David Beckham be included in the squad on footballing merit alone?
The former England captain is doing invaluable work for the FA's 2018 World Cup bid, but Capello already has plenty of right-sided options in Theo Walcott, Aaron Lennon and Shaun Wright-Phillips.

Reasons to be cheerful

The South African climate
The World Cup will be played during the South African winter, often in sub-zero temperatures and in conditions that will favour northern European teams.

Capello's winning mentality
In the past England have lacked the mental strength needed to see off opponents, especially in penalty shoot-outs. Capello has instilled the players with a confidence that suggests they could reach a higher level this time.

Experienced players
Englishmen have made 19 appearances in the last five Champions League Finals' starting line-ups – more than any other nation.

Reasons to be fearful

Injuries and fatigue
No build-up to a major tournament would be complete without concerns over metatarsals and other injuries. With English teams heavily fancied to feature in the latter stages of the Champions League, Capello could be worrying abut his players right up to the Champions League Final in Madrid on May 22.

The No1 issue
First-choice keeper David James is injury-prone and will be 40 this year. The goalkeeping alternatives lack tournament and European experience (Robert Green, Scott Carson) or cannot hold down a starting place at their club (Ben Foster).

Veteran...James

No Plan B
Traditionally, English teams have lacked creativity and this one is no different. Nobody is sure what formation Capello will choose if chief creative influence Wayne Rooney is injured.

FRANCE

by Howard Johnson

Qualification counts for nothing

Raymond Domenech's struggling side could still have a big say in South Africa

Controversial...Gallas (no5) scores the winner against the Republic of Ireland

LES BLEUS may have notched up a national first in qualifying for their fourth successive World Cup finals, but nobody is in the mood for celebrating. A lacklustre campaign – in a supposedly easy pool that featured Austria, Faroe Islands, Lithuania, Romania and Serbia – saw coach Raymond Domenech's team forced into a two-legged play-off after finishing in second place, behind the Serbs.

Then, after securing a 1-0 win against the Republic of Ireland in Dublin thanks to a Nicolas Anelka goal, all hell was let loose in the second leg back at the Stade de France in Paris.

With the Republic deservedly leading 1-0 at the end of 90 minutes, extra time exploded into life in the 103rd minute when Thierry Henry blatantly controlled the ball with his hand in the opposition's penalty area before setting up William Gallas to prod home what turned out to be the decisive goal. The match finished 1-1, France qualified 2-1 on aggregate and their baron was saved in a most unsavoury manner.

The fallout over "The Hand Of Henry" was massive, with Ireland's call for a rematch falling on deaf ears and many French fans hugely uncomfortable about their side cheating their way to South Africa. If nothing else, the incident proved that much of FIFA's trumpeting about the spirit of fair play is merely hot air. Certainly the referee's decision is final, but to see Henry wildly celebrating his unsporting act sticks in the craw for many.

> **Many French fans are hugely uncomfortable about the way their side cheated their way to South Africa**

What's done is done though, and some truly rotten French displays during qualifying – including a limp 3-1 defeat away to Austria, an unconvincing 1-0 win in Paris against Lithuania, and a victory by the same lowly score away to the minnows of the Faroes – have been generally forgotten amid a feeling of relief that the 2006 finalists will at least be there in South Africa.

The positives for France are that they also flirted with disaster back in 2006 before going on to make the Final, Hugo Lloris is emerging as a hugely talented young keeper, and midfielder Yoann Gourcuff can genuinely aspire to establishing himself as a world-class performer in South Africa.

If the talismanic Franck Ribery is fully fit, if Anelka is in the mood to wreak havoc up front, and if Gallas can hold a sometimes suspect defence together, then there's no reason why Domenech's side can't put their qualification woes behind them and mount a serious challenge for the ultimate prize. ●

For the record

QUALIFYING CAMPAIGN
EUROPE GROUP 7

06.09.08	Austria-France	3-1
10.09.08	France-Serbia	2-1
11.10.08	Romania-France	2-2
28.03.09	Lithuania-France	0-1
01.04.09	France-Lithuania	1-0
12.08.09	Faroe Islands-France	0-1
05.09.09	France-Romania	1-1
09.09.09	Serbia-France	1-1
10.10.09	France-Faroe Islands	5-0
14.10.09	France-Austria	3-1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Serbia (Q)	10	7	1	2	22	8	22
France (P)	10	6	3	1	18	9	21
Austria	10	4	2	4	14	15	14
Lithuania	10	4	0	6	10	11	12
Romania	10	3	3	4	12	18	12
Faroe Islands	10	1	1	8	5	20	4

PLAY-OFF

14.11.09	Rep Ireland-France	0-1
18.11.09	France-Rep Ireland	1-1 (aet)

PLAYERS USED IN QUALIFIERS
ELEVEN GAMES
Bakary SAGNA (1,001 mins), Thierry HENRY (968 mins)
TEN
Lassana DIARRA (930 mins), Patrice EVRA (930 mins), William GALLAS (930 mins), Yoann GOURCUFF (759 mins)
EIGHT
Jeremy TOULALAN (692 mins), Nicolas ANELKA (625 mins) Andre-Pierre GIGNAC (439 mins), Karim BENZEMA (361 mins)
SEVEN
Steve MANDANDA (618 mins), Alou DIARRA (493 mins)
SIX
Hugo LLORIS (489 mins), Franck RIBERY (341 mins), Florent MALOUDA (253 mins)
FIVE
Eric ABIDAL (450 mins), Sidney GOVOU (387 mins)
FOUR
Sebastien SQUILLACI (381 mins), Julien ESCUDE (279 mins)
TWO
Gael CLICHY (180 mins), Pegay LUYINDULA (132 mins), Moussa SISSOKO (118 mins), Samir NASRI (91 mins)
ONE
Jean-Alain BOUMSONG (90 mins), Rod FANNI (90 mins), Philippe MEXES (90 mins), Bafetimbi GOMIS (11 mins), Mathieu FLAMINI (1 min)

SCORERS IN QUALIFYING
FOUR GOALS
Andre-Pierre GIGNAC, Thierry HENRY
THREE
Nicolas ANELKA, Franck RIBERY
TWO
Karim BENZEMA, William GALLAS
ONE
Yoann GOURCUFF, Sidney GOVOU

William HILL 14/1 to win the World Cup 5/6 to win Group A

The key men

Raymond Domenech
The spiky coach is almost universally disliked in his home country, but he's as thick-skinned as they come and will lead France with the same cocksure demeanour that he has always displayed.

His own man...Domenech

Franck Ribery
A hugely talented attacking midfielder who will see South Africa as the perfect stage to display his awesome all-round package of skills.

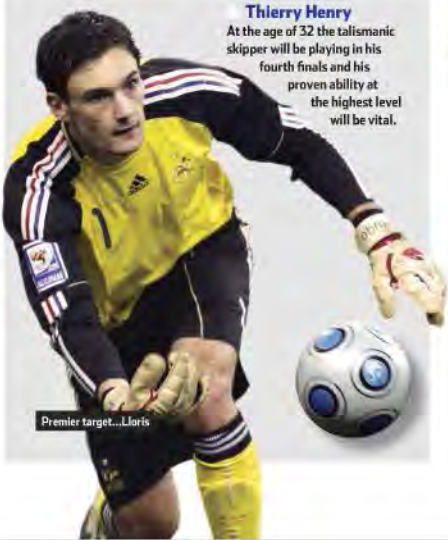
Hugo Lloris
The 23-year-old Lyon goalkeeper has already attracted the attention of English clubs such as Manchester United.

Influential...Gourcuff

Yoann Gourcuff
Has the potential to become, if not the next Zinedine Zidane, then certainly a midfielder who can wield as much influence on the national team as "Zizou" did in his prime.

Top notch...Henry

Thierry Henry
At the age of 32 the talismanic skipper will be playing in his fourth finals and his proven ability at the highest level will be vital.


Premier target...Lloris

The unanswered questions

Opportunity...Benzema

Can Karim Benzema fulfil his promise?
Domenech has yet to give the Real Madrid man a run in the team. Is this where he forces his way into the spotlight?

Who will line up with William Gallas in central defence?
Escude? Abidal? Squillaci? Mexes? None of these four options have managed to prove themselves as the Arsenal man's first-choice starting partner.

Will Patrick Vieira return for an Indian summer?
At the age of 33, the former international skipper with the will of steel could still be a useful asset for France – so long as he can prove he can still do the business with Manchester City.

Reasons to be cheerful

The depth and quality of the squad
On paper, France are more than a match for anyone, boasting any number of top-draw players in almost all positions.

France have been drawn in an easy group
South Africa failed to qualify for the African Nations Cup, Uruguay only made it to the finals through a play-off and Mexico have recorded just one draw and five defeats in their six meetings with France.

Les Bleus won't fear coming up against unknown playing styles
Since the Spring of 2006, France have played a healthy seven matches against South American opponents (including both Mexico and Uruguay) and four games against African sides.

Reasons to be fearful

The Domenech factor
The coach has often polarised opinions within his own camp and if his somewhat truculent personality creates factions it could be catastrophic for France.

Altitude sickness
France's last group game is against South Africa in Bloemfontein, one of the competition's highest venues. If there's a lot riding on this game will the French be left gasping for air like Spain, who incredibly lost 2-0 to USA in this venue at the last Confederations Cup?

Breathless...Free State Stadium

They could meet England
If both France and England top their respective groups, and then win their first knockout games, the two countries will meet in the quarter-finals and, given Fabio Capello's World Cup qualifying campaign record of nine wins and just one defeat, nobody will want to play England.

GERMANY

by Nick Bidwell

Minimum fuss

It was business as usual for Joachim Low's new-look side in qualifying

Threat...Schweinsteiger (in white) causes Russia problems in Moscow

DESPITE BEING held twice by Finland (3-3 in Helsinki and 1-1 in a dead-rubber in Hamburg) and riding their luck somewhat in home and away victories over Russia (2-1 in Dortmund and 1-0 in Moscow), Germany's unbeaten passage to South Africa had absolutely nothing of the fluke about it.

Since 1954, the *Nationalmannschaft* have emerged unscathed from 13 out of 13 World Cup qualifying campaigns (they were hosts twice) and the latest bore all the hallmarks we have come to expect from the men with the eagle on their chest: resilience, discipline, attention to detail, ability to win the big points and rock-steady form on their travels.

At the risk of venturing into the well-trodden territory of Teutonic efficiency, another of their attributes is the hard-headed manner in which they prioritise their way through a group stage. Germany rarely waste effort and flourish on beating so-called minnows, but when the stakes are at their highest, they immediately flick a switch to turn themselves into an intensely-driven commando unit, a machine for the express purpose of grinding out results.

The victory in Russia last autumn – a hard-fought 90 minutes which sealed Germany's place in the 2010 finals – perfectly illustrated Germany's X Factor. While the hosts dominated possession and created far more chances, the single-mindedness, tactical discipline and utter ruthlessness of the visitors would ultimately carry them over the line.

That Germany only dropped four points on the road to South Africa is all the more remarkable since coach Joachim "Jogi" Low has spent the last 18 months in rebuilding mode. No fewer than nine of the squad that finished runners-up at Euro 2008 have been jettisoned – notably goalkeeper Jens Lehmann, midfield warrior Torsten Frings and centre-back Christoph Metzelder – and, contrary to the age-old maxim on continuity ruling, Low has gone debutant-crazy, bringing in no fewer than 13 new faces, including the outstanding young Werder Bremen attacking midfielder Mesut Ozil.

> **That Germany only dropped four points is all the more remarkable as they spent the last 18 months in rebuilding mode**

Low, who has signed a contract extension to remain in charge until 2012, also seems to be succeeding in making Germany more flexible tactically. Once upon a time a straight 4-4-2 was de rigueur, but these days the shape of the team is very much an ever-changing tableau, with the 4-2-3-1 used to great effect in Moscow now the default formation. ●

For the record

QUALIFYING CAMPAIGN
EUROPE GROUP 4

06.09.08	Liechtenstein-Germany	0-6
10.09.08	Finland-Germany	3-3
11.10.08	Germany-Russia	2-1
15.10.08	Germany-Wales	1-0
28.03.09	Germany-Liechtenstein	4-0
01.04.09	Wales-Germany	0-2
12.08.09	Azerbaijan-Germany	0-2
09.09.09	Germany-Azerbaijan	4-0
10.10.09	Russia-Germany	0-1
14.10.09	Germany-Finland	1-1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Germany (Q)	10	8	2	0	26	5	26
Russia (P)	10	7	1	2	18	6	22
Finland	10	5	3	2	14	14	18
Wales	10	4	0	6	9	12	12
Azerbaijan	10	1	2	7	4	14	5
Liechtenstein	10	0	2	8	2	23	2

PLAYERS USED IN QUALIFIERS
TEN GAMES
Philipp LAHM (900 mins), Mario GOMEZ (462 mins)
NINE
Bastian SCHWEINSTEIGER (779 mins), Lukas PODOLSKI (764 mins), Thomas HITZLSPERGER (751 mins), Piotr TROCHOWSKI (567 mins)
EIGHT
Michael BALLACK (676 mins), Heiko WESTERMANN (641 mins), Miroslav KLOSE (492 mins)
SEVEN
Per MERTESACKER (630 mins)
SIX
Simon ROLFES (321 mins)
FIVE
Rene ADLER (450 mins), Robert ENKE (450 mins), Serdar TASCI (450 mins)
FOUR
Andreas BECK (314 mins), Arne FRIEDRICH (262 mins), Mesut OZIL (213 mins), Patrick HELMES (82 mins)
THREE
Clemens FRITZ (198 mins)
TWO
Marcell SCHAFER (136 mins), CACAU (105 mins), Marcell JANSEN (78 mins), Marko MARIN (35 mins)
ONE
Jerome BOATENG (69 mins), Kevin KURANYI (15 mins), Andreas HINKEL (8 mins), Torsten FRINGS (7 mins)

SCORERS IN QUALIFIERS
SEVEN GOALS
Miroslav KLOSE
SIX
Lukas PODOLSKI
FOUR
Michael BALLACK
THREE
Bastian SCHWEINSTEIGER
ONE
Thomas HITZLSPERGER, Marcell JANSEN, Simon ROLFES, Piotr TROCHOWSKI, Heiko WESTERMANN (plus one own goal)

The key men

Joachim Low
Urbane, intelligent and with a steelier character than he is given credit for, Jurgen Klinsmann's former assistant has disproved the theory that capable lieutenants do not make good generals.

In charge...Low

Philipp Lahm
A dangerous attacking full-back thanks to his explosive speed, sharp changes of direction and heads-up delivery of crosses.

Mesut Ozil
The young Germany-born playmaker of Turkish extraction has proved a revelation since breaking into the side, supplying subtlety, quick thinking and lashings of what the side needed most: unpredictability.

Miroslav Klose
Bayern Munich boss Louis Van Gaal may not rate the Polish-born striker – keeping him on the bench for much of the season – but ring-rustiness did not prevent him finishing as Germany's top scorer in qualifying.

Fresh approach...Ozil

Michael Ballack
Strangely for someone so self-possessed, Germany's skipper is more assertive for his country than his club, Chelsea. The midfield cornerstone, he is the team's "*lenker und denker*" (linker and thinker).

Leader...Ballack

National choice...Klose

The unanswered questions

Where will Philipp Lahm line up?
Right-back is Germany's problem position and Low has attempted to solve it by switching Lahm from his normal left-back berth. However, the right-footed Lahm offers much more when cutting inside.

Who will be in goal?
The goalkeeping spot is in the same state of flux as before Robert Enke's tragic suicide last year. Excellent young Leverkusen keeper Rene Adler is the man in possession, but Schalke's Manuel Neuer and Bremen's Tim Wiese are still lobbying hard.

Will Low bring back Kevin Kuranyi?
In fine form for Schalke, Kuranyi is making a strong case for inclusion. But after walking out on the squad early in the qualifying campaign, the odds are against it.

In form...Kuranyi

Reasons to be cheerful

Tradition
Germany have an exceptional World Cup record (three titles, four times runners-up) and their players have an unshakeable belief. They will be the best prepared and mentally strong.

Past winners...in Italy in 1990

The regenerative powers of the *Nationalmannschaft*
Even those struggling for their clubs produce for the national team. Low is staunchly loyal to players he can rely on and makes allowances.

Up-and-coming talent
The German game is awash with young and exciting attacking prospects. The Leverkusen trio of Toni Kroos, Stefan Kiessling and Patrick Helmes all have a shot at going to South Africa, as do the Bremen pair of Marko Marin and Aaron Hunt, and Thomas Muller of Bayern Munich.

Reasons to be fearful

Ballack's clashes with management
Both Low and general manager Oliver Bierhoff have been on the receiving end of vitriolic verbal volleys from the captain and no one can be sure that this particular volcano will not erupt again.

Tough group
Germany are past masters at saving their best efforts for the knockout rounds of tournaments. However, that may not be possible this time in a tough Group D which also contains Ghana, Serbia and Australia.

A lack of strength in depth
While the first XI is a match for most, some of the back-up players have been found wanting when parachuted in.

GHANA

by Mark Gleeson

Spoilt for choice

The success of a weakened Black Stars squad in Angola bodes well for South Africa this summer

Star turn...Andre Ayew (No13) helped Ghana reach the Final of the African Nations Cup

ALTHOUGH THEY have long been among the powerhouses of African football – evidenced by a record they share with Egypt of eight appearances in an African Nations Cup Final – this will only be Ghana's second appearance at the World Cup finals.

It follows their debut in Germany, four years ago, when they were the only one of five African sides to make it past the first round, eventually beaten by Brazil in the round of 16.

Ghana have consistently produced top-class footballers who have achieved at the highest level of club football, but have yet to harness that talent into an effective national team.

The generation of Abedi Pele and Tony Yeboah should have reached past World Cups, but there was never much enthusiasm between the two to pull in the same direction.

Junior teams that won world championships and a bronze at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics should have also kicked on. The generation that produced Nii Lamptey and Samuel Kuffour had much promise but soon fizzled out.

The production line, however, has not. Stephen Appiah, Michael Essien and Sulley Muntari are the current axis upon which Ghana have played with much conviction over recent years, qualifying easily for the 2010 finals. Paired with Mali in their final group, the Black Stars were expected to be involved in a tough tussle with a side as equally endowed with star quality.

Ghana, however, had it wrapped up after two games when they won 2-0 away in Bamako and, after four successive wins, they became the first African side to secure their place in South Africa. They could even afford to squander points in their last two matches as coach Milovan Rajevac experimented with fringe choices.

> **Ghana have consistently produced top-class footballers who have achieved at the highest level of club football**

But it was the exploits of the Black Stars at January's African Nations Cup that impressed most.

Appiah had not recovered in time to play in Angola, Muntari was left out for disciplinary reasons and Essien arrived belatedly with a dodgy hamstring and left having had just 45 minutes of action after being crocked in training. On top of that, regulars John Paintsil, John Mensah and Laryea Kingston were also ruled out, leaving Rajevac to pick eight players from the Under-20 side.

He would not have set out with much more ambition than to use the tournament to test several options and build possible cover should his key stars not make it back in time for the World Cup. Instead, they went all the way to the Final, creating a delicious selection dilemma for the Serbia-born coach. ●

For the record

QUALIFYING CAMPAIGN
AFRICA ROUND 2, GROUP 5

01.06.08	Ghana-Libya	3-0
08.06.08	Lesotho-Ghana	2-3
14.06.08	Gabon-Ghana	2-0
22.06.08	Ghana-Gabon	2-0
05.09.08	Libya-Ghana	1-0
11.10.08	Ghana-Lesotho	3-0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ghana (Q)	6	4	0	2	11	5	12
Gabon (Q)	6	4	0	2	6	3	12
Libya	6	4	0	2	7	4	12
Lesotho	6	0	0	6	2	16	0

ROUND 3, GROUP D

29.03.09	Ghana-Benin	1-0
07.06.09	Mali-Ghana	0-2
20.06.09	Sudan-Ghana	0-2
06.09.09	Ghana-Sudan	2-0
11.10.09	Benin-Ghana	1-0
15.11.09	Ghana-Mali	2-2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ghana (Q)	6	4	1	1	9	3	13
Benin	6	3	1	2	6	6	10
Mali	6	2	3	1	8	7	9
Sudan	6	0	1	5	2	9	1

PLAYERS USED IN QUALIFIERS

TWELVE GAMES
Richard KINGSON (1,080 mins)

ELEVEN
Anthony ANNAN (990 mins), John PAINTSIL (989 mins), Eric ADOO (946 mins), Michael ESSIEN (903 mins)

TEN
Harrison AFFUL (900 mins), Haminu DRAMAN (272 mins)

EIGHT
John MENSAH (708 mins), Sulley MUNTARI (684 mins), Prince TAGOE (627 mins)

SEVEN
Matthew AMOAH (591 mins), Laryea KINGSTON (476 mins), Junior AGOGO (436 mins)

SIX
Stephen APPIAH (446 mins)

FOUR
Samuel INKOOM (360 mins), Jonathan QUARTEY (360 mins), Kwadwo ASAMOAH (239 mins), Asamoah GYAN (196 mins), Eric BEKOE (73 mins), Isaac VORSAH (52 mins)

THREE
Quincy OWUSU-ABEYIE (75 mins)

TWO
OPOKU Agyemang (141 mins), Francis DICKOH (56 mins), Emmanuel AGYEMANG-BADU (15 mins)

ONE
Daniel YEBOAH (90 mins), Samuel YEBOAH (70 mins), Issah AHMED (60 mins), John BOYE (30 mins), Lee ADDY (11 mins), Derek BOATENG (4 mins)

SCORERS IN QUALIFIERS

FIVE GOALS
Matthew AMOAH

FOUR
Junior AGOGO

THREE
Prince TAGOE

TWO
Sulley MUNTARI, Laryea KINGSTON

ONE
Stephen APPIAH, Michael ESSIEN, Kwadwo ASAMOAH, Anthony ANNAN

William HILL 66/1 to win the World Cup 18/1 to exit at the semi-final stage

The key men

Shrewd...Rajevac

Milovan Rajevac
A highly-rated tactician who worked alongside Bora Milutinovic in the Middle East.

Sulley Muntari
Full of skill and cunning, he is key to the side. His refusal to play a friendly in November led to disciplinary action against him by the Ghana FA, which led to him missing out on the African Nations Cup finals in Angola.

Asamoah Gyan
Now seemingly over his litany of injuries, he has been in good goalscoring form for Rennes in France and for his country. It is a stark contrast to the brooding player sidelined when Ghana hosted the 2008 African Nations Cup.

In form...Gyan

Isaac Vorsah
The Hoffenheim defender was a classy performer at the African Nations Cup, emerging as one of the best of the tournament and making the absence of Ghana's two regular centre-backs seem a trivial matter.

Michael Essien
A genuine world star for his work rate, power and strength. A talisman for the team, almost single-handedly qualifying them for the 2006 World Cup finals and proving influential in the 2010 campaign too, despite a mounting list of injuries.

Tower of strength...Essien

The unanswered questions

Draw...tricky

Is the draw too tough?
Ghana did not have much luck with the draw at the last World Cup in Germany, yet overcame both USA and Czech Republic to advance past the first round. This time they have Germany, Australia and Serbia to contend with.

Is this Africa's future super-team?
With so many promising youngsters, Ghana may be on the cusp of a period of dominance in continental football that they have not had since the 1960s. With it could come the potential of also going further than any other African side has gone before in the World Cup.

Just how influential will Michael Essien be?
Chelsea's workaholic midfielder has often had to carry the Ghana side on his own. He has played virtually every position on the pitch for his country and, when on song, he adds an extra dimension to the Black Stars' capability.

Reasons to be cheerful

New generation of talented players
Winning the Under-20 World Cup in Egypt last year, and then quickly shifting many of those key young players up into the full national side, has given Ghana a big boost and much hope of brighter things to come.

Youth...champions

African Nations Cup form
The absence of many of the team's regulars was thought to be a bridge too far for the Black Stars, but progressing all the way to the Final in Angola is a pleasant surprise for everyone and a major morale boost on route to South Africa.

Back from injury
Centre-back John Mensah's chronic back problem could curtail his chances, but the rest of their injured stars should be back in shape by the time the World Cup kicks off.

Reasons to be fearful

Muntari's attitude
A run-in with the authorities has soured relations between key midfielder Sulley Muntari and the rest of the squad.

Appiah's absence
Captain Stephen Appiah has long been the leader of the team, but his persistent injury woes threaten the order of the side.

Unrealistic expectation
Having done so well in Angola, there may be too many Ghanaians now expecting the side to achieve the same in South Africa.

GREECE

by Lou Economopoulos

Otto the optimist

Coach Rehhagel is confident that his underdogs can spring a Euro 2004-style upset despite failures in 1994 and 2006

Play-off battle...Samaras (no7) takes on Ukraine's Yevhen Khacheridi

HAVING STRUGGLED in a qualifying group that should not have been difficult, Otto Rehhagel's side pulled off a thrilling win – thanks to a goal from Dimitris Salpigidis in a frozen second leg in Ukraine – to sneak through to South Africa via a play-off.

Few may have thought qualification possible after the goalless first leg in Athens – but then who would have thought Greece would be Euro 2004 champions?

"Our boys were rewarded for an unbelievable passion and fighting spirit," says coach Otto Rehhagel. "We said that no road should be too far and before you have success you have to have the gods sweating for you."

Rehhagel had once again accomplished the unexpected and – despite some harsh criticism from the Greek media, who claimed he was making unpopular line-up changes and his team were still playing unattractive, defensive football – he managed to take Greece to their third major finals (they qualified for Euro 2008 as well) since taking over in 2001.

There have been some bleak spots along the way for Rehhagel – such as a disastrous showing in the 2005 Confederations Cup, failure to qualify for the 2006 World Cup and a horrible performance in Euro 2008 – and the 2010 World Cup group stage also had its ups and downs.

Things had started well, with wins away to Luxembourg (3-0) and Latvia (2-0), and at home against Moldova (3-0). But the train derailed when Switzerland arrived in Athens and left with a hard-fought 2-1 victory. A 1-1 draw in Israel then put Greece under further pressure, before they bounced back with a 2-1 home win over the Israelis.

> **In Greece's only previous World Cup appearance, in 1994, they were also drawn in the same group as Argentina and Nigeria**

The crucial match for first place was won 2-0 by Switzerland, and the 1-1 draw in Moldova that followed sealed Greece's fate as they ended the campaign with a 5-2 drubbing of Latvia and a timid 2-1 triumph over Luxembourg.

Greece's only previous appearance in the World Cup finals was in 1994, in the US, when they were also drawn in the same group as Argentina and Nigeria. Last time they lost all three games (to Argentina 4-0, Bulgaria 4-0 and Nigeria 2-0), but Rehhagel remains optimistic.

"A lot of years have past since 1994," he says. "We have half a year to prepare ourselves. What is significant is that the players are healthy as we don't have too many players to choose from.

"Our goal is to make the Greeks proud." ●

For the record

QUALIFYING CAMPAIGN
EUROPE GROUP 2

06.09.08	Luxembourg-Greece	0-3
10.09.08	Latvia-Greece	0-2
11.10.08	Greece-Moldova	3-0
15.10.08	Greece-Switzerland	1-2
28.03.09	Israel-Greece	1-1
01.04.09	Greece-Israel	2-1
05.09.09	Switzerland-Greece	2-0
09.09.09	Moldova-Greece	1-1
10.10.09	Greece-Latvia	5-2
14.10.09	Greece-Luxembourg	2-1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Switzerland (Q)	10	6	3	1	18	8	21
Greece (P)	10	6	2	2	20	10	20
Latvia	10	5	2	3	18	15	17
Israel	10	4	4	2	20	10	16
Luxembourg	10	1	2	7	4	25	5
Moldova	10	0	3	7	6	18	3

PLAY-OFF

14.11.09	Greece-Ukraine	0-0
18.11.09	Ukraine-Greece	0-1

PLAYERS USED IN QUALIFIERS
TWELVE GAMES
Theofanis GEKAS (772 mins)
ELEVEN
Sotiris KYRGIAKOS (883 mins)
TEN
Kostas KATSOURANIS (882 mins), Angelos CHARISTEAS (792 mins), Georgios KARAGOUNIS (772 mins), Georgios SAMARAS (653 mins)
NINE
Dimitrios SALPINGIDIS (535 mins), Dimitros PATSATZOGLOU (441 mins)
EIGHT
Kostas CHALKIAS (720 mins), Vasilis TOROSIDIS (720 mins), Avraam PAPADOPOULOS (590 mins)
SEVEN
Georgios SEITARIDIS (630 mins)
SIX
Vangelis MORAS (465 mins), Nikos SPIROPOULOS (460 mins), Angelos BASINAS (322 mins)
FIVE
Traianos DELLAS (450 mins)
FOUR
Loukas VYNTRA (303 mins), Sokratis PAPASTATHOPOULOS (299 mins), Alexandros TZIOLIS (242 mins), Ioannis AMANATIDIS (159 mins)
THREE
Alexandros TZORVAS (270 mins), Nikos LIBEROPOULOS (112 mins)
ONE
Evangelos MANTZIOS (90 mins), Michalis SIFAKIS (90 mins), Georgios FOTAKIS (46 mins), Kostas MITROGLOU (39 mins)

SCORERS IN QUALIFIERS
TEN GOALS
Theotanis GEKAS
FOUR
Angelos CHARISTEAS
TWO
Dimitrios SALPINGIDIS, Georgios SAMARAS, Vasileios TOROSIDIS
ONE
Konstantinos KATSOURANIS

William HILL 150/1 to win World Cup 5/4 to reach second stage

The key men

Otto Rehhagel
Once again Greece's hopes lay with their German coach's masterful and sometimes stubborn tactics, plus the fact he often pulls out a trick from up his sleeve.

Master tactician...Rehhagel

Georgios Samaras
Constantly improving Celtic striker who is getting more and more playing time from his coach.

Theofanis Gekas
The Hertha Berlin striker may not have been getting too many chances in Germany but he couldn't stop scoring for his country in the group stage.

Spark...Karagounis

Giorgos Karagounis
The veteran Panathinaikos midfielder is the spark on and off the pitch, provoking the best team spirit as captain.

Kostas Katsouranis
A gifted midfielder from Panathinaikos who protects the defence, while also providing for the forwards.

Gifted...Katsouranis

On fire...Gekas

The unanswered questions

Will Ioannis Amanatidis be fit?
After serious knee surgery, the Eintracht Frankfurt midfielder is expected to return to training in March.

Will Rehhagel adopt a more attack-minded policy in South Africa?
Greece used three strikers (Gekas, Samaras and Nurnberg's Angelos Charisteas) in the final outings of the group stage, but could return to a safety-first tactic.

Who will replace Vasilis Pliatsikas?
The promising young Schalke midfielder is struggling with injury and unlikely to go to South Africa.

Injured...Amanatidis

Reasons to be cheerful

Happy families
The players have been told that they will be allowed to have their wives with them in South Africa.

Financial incentive
The squad will be given a very big bonus if they make it past the group stage.

The coach is fighting fit
After successful hernia and prostate gland surgery in early January, Rehaggel's wife reports that "he is completely healthy and full of strength for the World Cup".

Reasons to be fearful

History could repeat itself
Greece face Argentina and Nigeria once again in the World Cup after 1994's whitewash by both teams.

Little back up
Any any more injuries will leave an already thin squad desperately short.

An extended league programme
The Greek Super League play-offs go on into May, adding to Rehhagel's problems as he gathers his players for training in Switzerland on May 22.

Memories...v Argentina (in blue) in 1994

HOLLAND

by Klaas-Jan Droppert

Perfect preparation

Hopes are high for Bert Van Marwijk's side after they came through their qualifying campaign with a 100 per cent record

Easy does it... Van Persie (left) scores against Scotland

FACED WITH opponents such as Norway and Scotland, Holland were never under any threat in their qualifying campaign and they were the first European nation to make it to the 2010 finals.

With eight straight wins – during which they scored 17 goals and only conceded two – the *Oranje* were simply the best in their group and coach Bert Van Marwijk was never given any cause for concern. The opposition may have been weak, but sensible decisions and tranquility in the squad played their part.

From day one, the former Feyenoord and Borussia Dortmund boss stuck to the 4-5-1 formation introduced by his predecessor, Marco Van Basten. Even the names were the same – with the exception of Edwin Van der Sar and Ruud Van Nistelrooy, who both announced their retirement from international football after Euro 2008.

The only real change was the inclusion of Van Marwijk's son-in-law, Mark Van Bommel, who had refused to play under Van Basten. And even Van Bommel's return was fully accepted since Orlando Engelaar – who is now back in the Eredivisie with PSV Eindhoven – was having a miserable time at Schalke.

Throughout the campaign Van Marwijk, not a fan of experiments, stood by his players – so much so that when goalkeeper Maarten Stekelenburg was dropped to the bench at Ajax by Van Basten, he was still first choice for the national team.

"Changes make it difficult to create a team in which players can trust each other," says Van Marwijk, a former winger who played for Go Ahead Eagles, AZ Alkmaar and MVV Maastricht, and who won one international cap.

Only on occasion has Van Marwijk not stuck with his tried and trusted players, with Van der Sar returning temporarily when Stekelenburg was injured, and youngsters Gregory Van der Wiel and Eljero Elia being fast-tracked into the senior squad.

> **The *Oranje* were simply the best in their group and coach Bert Van Marwijk was never given any cause for concern**

Van Marwijk knows that the real challenges lie ahead but he is giving little away on a major selection dilemma, knowing that he has to make a choice between Robin Van Persie, Wesley Sneijder and Rafael Van der Vaart. During the qualifiers, the absence of players through injury meant he seldom had to make a tough call.

Meanwhile, the door has been kept open for Van Nistelrooy – who has now joined Hamburg from Real Madrid with one eye on South Africa – and Van der Sar to return should they change their minds over retirement. He has insisted that players need playing time to earn a ticket to South Africa, so he will be watching events at Real Madrid (Van der Vaart) and Milan (Klaas-Jan Huntelaar) carefully. ●

For the record

QUALIFYING CAMPAIGN
EUROPE GROUP 9

10.09.08	Macedonia-Holland	1-2
11.10.08	Holland-Iceland	2-0
15.10.08	Norway-Holland	0-1
28.03.09	Holland-Scotland	3-0
01.04.09	Holland-Macedonia	4-0
06.06.09	Iceland-Holland	1-2
10.06.09	Holland-Norway	2-0
09.09.09	Scotland-Holland	0-1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Holland (Q)	8	8	0	0	17	2	24
Norway	8	2	4	2	9	7	10
Scotland	8	3	1	4	6	11	10
Macedonia	8	2	1	5	5	11	7
Iceland	8	1	2	5	7	13	5

PLAYERS USED IN QUALIFIERS
EIGHT GAMES
Joris MATHUSEN (720 mins), Giovanni VAN BRONCKHORST (676 mins), Andre OOUER (658 mins), Dirk KUYT (618 mins), Klaas-Jan HUNTELAAR (443 mins)
SEVEN
Mark VAN BOMMEL (630 mins), Rafael VAN DER VAART (438 mins)
SIX
Arjen ROBBEN (458 mins), Nigel DE JONG (444 mins), Robin VAN PERSIE (425 mins)
FIVE
Maarten STEKELENBURG (450 mins), Wesley SNEIJDER (202 mins), Ryan BABEL (165 mins), Ibrahim AFELLAY (113 mins)
THREE
John HEITINGA (270 mins), Gregory VAN DER WIEL (270 mins), Denny DE ZEEUW (256 mins)
TWO
Dirk MARCELLIS (180 mins), Edwin VAN DER SAR (180 mins), Stijn SCHAARS (100 mins)
ONE
Michel VORM (90 mins), Khalid BOULAHROUZ (62 mins), Edson BRAAFHEID (44 mins), Eljero ELIA (18 mins), Davide MENDES DA SILVA (10 mins)

SCORERS IN QUALIFIERS
THREE GOALS
Klaas-Jan HUNTELAAR, Dirk KUYT
TWO
Mark VAN BOMMEL, Rafael VAN DER VAART
ONE
Nigel DE JONG, Eljero ELIA, John HEITINGA, Joris MATHUSEN, Andre OOUER, Arjen ROBBEN, Robin VAN PERSIE

William HILL 14/1 to win World Cup 2/1 to exit at quarter-finals

The key men

Consistent...Van Marwijk

Bert Van Marwijk
Took charge of the national side in August 2008 and has seldom made changes to their tactics or line-ups.

First choice...Mathijsen

Joris Mathijsen
Despite his many critics, the Hamburg defender remains one of the first names on the team sheet. Played in every qualifying match in consecutive campaigns.

Robin Van Persie
Providing he remains fit, the Arsenal man will be his country's leader of the pack: either up front, on the wings or in midfield.

Creative...Sneijder

Wesley Sneijder
Midfield creator who has been in great form for Internazionale this season but may not make Van Marwijk's starting line-up.

Mark Van Bommel
With so much attacking flair in the team, the midfield controller is a cornerstone of the side's defensive strategy.

Defensive...Van Bommel

The unanswered questions

Still time...Van der Sar

Will Edwin Van der Sar return?
The keeper has not closed the international door entirely and the coach will wait until the last moment for a decision.

Is there time for Ruud Van Nistelrooy to stake a claim?
Like Van der Sar, the 33-year-old forward could be persuaded to reverse his decision to retire, especially if he thrives in Germany with his new club Hamburg.

Which of Rafael Van der Vaart, Robin Van Persie and Wesley Sneijder will lose out on a starting place?
All three may be key players but there is probably only room for two of them in the line-up.

Reasons to be cheerful

Clear vision
The system is very rigid: a 4-5-1 formation with every player knowing his place – either on the pitch or on the bench.

Strength in midfield
Vast creativity with Rafael Van der Vaart, Wesley Sneijder and Robin Van Persie, plenty of defensive control with Mark Van Bommel and Nigel De Jong, and speed on the wings with Arjen Robben and Eljero Elia.

Peaceful qualifying campaign
No problems, on and off the pitch. If the media were looking for a problem, the coach dismissed them as a storm in a tea cup.

Reasons to be fearful

The defence
This is one area in which the fans and the media do not have complete confidence. Maarten Stekelenburg has been unsettled by calls for Edwin Van der Sar's return, Joris Mathijsen is inexperienced against top strikers and there are doubts over the full-backs' defensive qualities.

No1 worry...Stekelenburg (in blue) raises doubts

Lack of first-team action
Important players like Klaas-Jan Huntelaar and Rafael Van der Vaart are spending too much time on the bench at their clubs.

In need of a finisher
Holland have failed to score in their last three friendlies: against Australia, Italy and Paraguay. Huntelaar lacks rhythm and Robin Van Persie has been sidelined with injury.

HONDURAS

by Martin del Palacio Langer

God bless America

A last-gasp USA equaliser sent Honduras' best-ever national side to the World Cup finals

South Africa, here we come...Pavon (No9) and Costly celebrate

BACK IN January 2007, when Reinaldo Rueda took charge of the Honduras national team, it would have been impossible to imagine *Los Catrachos* in the 2010 World Cup finals.

Despite having competitive players at regional level, internationally the team were a complete disaster and hadn't even made it to the final round of the Germany 2006 qualifiers. In addition, the atmosphere in the dressing room was stifling and the relationship between the press and the players was at its lowest point in their history.

Three years later, the team's Colombian coach is being hailed as a miracle worker after Honduras qualified for only the second World Cup finals in their history, and deservedly so. Furthermore, they made it despite a very difficult environment, generated by the volatile political situation in the Central American country.

However, nothing came easy for Rueda's side. After defeating Puerto Rico without breaking sweat, they were drawn with Mexico, Jamaica and Canada in the second qualifying round. Yet they finished first and made it to the final hexagonal round with an encouraging 1-0 win over Mexico in San Pedro Sula.

In the final phase, inspired by the strength of Wilson Palacios and explosiveness of the evergreen Carlos Pavon, Honduras maintained impressive form. Understandable defeats in Costa Rica, USA and Mexico were compensated for with resounding victories at home against Costa Rica, Mexico, El Salvador and Trinidad & Tobago.

It all meant that, with one game left, Honduras needed to beat the USA in San Pedro Sula to book a ticket to South Africa.

> **Colombian coach Reinaldo Rueda is being hailed as a miracle worker... and deservedly so**

However, Pavon missed a penalty kick and two easy headers as the Hondurans lost 3-2 – a result which left them needing to win in the fortress of El Salvador and then wait for Costa Rica not to be victorious on American soil.

Honduras completed their task with a 1-0 victory, but the Ticos led by the same scoreline in Washington – until an equaliser by Jonathan Bornstein, in the fourth minute of injury time, sparked Honduran celebrations thousands of miles away.

Qualification was a deserved reward for the best generation in the history of Honduran football. With a large contingent of players plying their trade in Europe, they are a very organised team who defend well and are dangerous up front. If Spain, Chile and Switzerland believe they will have an easy ride against *Los Catrachos* they are in for a very unpleasant surprise. ●

For the record

QUALIFYING CAMPAIGN
CONCACAF ROUND 2

04.06.08	Honduras-Puerto Rico	4-0
14.06.08	Puerto Rico-Honduras	2-2

CONCACAF ROUND 3, GROUP 2

20.08.08	Mexico-Honduras	2-1
06.09.08	Canada-Honduras	1-2
10.09.08	Honduras-Jamaica	2-0
11.10.08	Honduras-Canada	3-1
15.10.08	Jamaica-Honduras	1-0
19.11.08	Honduras-Mexico	1-0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Honduras (Q)	6	4	0	2	9	5	12
Mexico (Q)	6	3	1	2	9	6	10
Jamaica	6	3	1	2	6	6	10
Canada	6	0	2	4	6	13	2

CONCACAF ROUND 4

11.02.09	Costa Rica-Honduras	2-0
28.03.09	Trinidad & Tobago-Honduras	1-1
01.04.09	Honduras-Mexico	3-1
06.06.09	USA-Honduras	2-1
10.06.09	Honduras-El Salvador 1	-0
12.08.09	Honduras-Costa Rica	4-0
05.09.09	Honduras-Trinidad & Tobago	4-1
09.09.09	Mexico-Honduras	1-0
10.10.09	Honduras-USA	2-3
14.10.09	El Salvador-Honduras	0-1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
USA (Q)	10	6	2	2	19	13	20
Mexico (Q)	10	6	1	3	18	12	19
Honduras (Q)	10	5	1	4	17	11	16
Costa Rica	10	5	1	4	15	15	16
El Salvador	10	2	2	6	9	15	8
Trinidad & Tobago	10	1	3	6	10	22	6

PLAYERS USED IN QUALIFYING
EIGHTEEN GAMES Noel VALLADARES (1,620 mins)
SEVENTEEN Amado GUEVARA (1,490 mins)
SIXTEEN Wilson PALACIOS (1,416 mins), Maynor FIGUEROA (1,408 mins), Carlo COSTLY (1,062 mins)
FIFTEEN Hendry THOMAS (866 mins)
FOURTEEN Ramon NUNEZ (827 mins)
THIRTEEN Dani TURCIOS (738 mins)
ELEVEN Osman CHAVEZ (379 mins), Emilio IZAGUIRRE (900 mins), David SUAZO (802 mins)
TEN Victor BERNARDEZ (811 mins), Julio Cesar DE LEON (739 mins)
NINE Carlos PAVON (746 mins)
EIGHT Sergio MENDOZA (714 mins), Mauricio SABILLON (676 mins), Walter MARTINEZ (235 mins)
FIVE Oscar GARCIA (239 mins), Ivan GUERRERO (230 mins)
FOUR Edgar ALVAREZ (233 mins)
THREE Marvin CHAVEZ (63 mins)
TWO Mario BEATA (180 mins), Erick NORALES (180 mins), Emil MARTINEZ (161 mins), Milton NUNEZ (52 mins), Carlos MEJIA (49 mins), Melvin VALLADARES (31 mins), Miguel CASTILLO (26 mins)
ONE Samuel CABALLERO (90 mins), Jerry PALACIOS (59 mins), Mario RODRIGUEZ (50 mins), Georgie WELCOME (24 mins), Saul MARTINEZ (20 mins)

SCORERS IN QUALIFIERS
SEVEN GOALS Carlos PAVON
SIX Carlo COSTLY
FOUR Julio Cesar DE LEON, David SUAZO
THREE Ramon NUNEZ
TWO Amado GUEVARA, Wilson PALACIOS
ONE Walter MARTINEZ, Hendry THOMAS, Melvin VALLADARES
(plus one own goal)

The key men

Architect...Rueda

Reinaldo Rueda
The architect of Honduras renaissance. He's idolised in the country and not without reason. A cunning and intelligent manager, one of the best minds at the World Cup.

Leader...Guevara

Amado Guevara
Inspirational team captain, on and off the field.

Maynor Figueroa
With more than 60 caps, he gives solidity and experience to a defence that is considered the weak spot of the team.

Wilson Palacios
The team's best player and its international face. Has shaken off a reputation as an underachiever for the national team with some excellent displays in the qualifiers.

Star turn...Palacios

Carlos Pavon
At 36, he is not able to play at his best for a whole season any more but he's still deadly for the national team.

Deadly...Pavon

The unanswered questions

Potential...Suazo

Will they be prepared enough?
They must arrange more games against quality opposition before the finals as they need as much experience as possible to overcome world-class rivals in a very tough group.

Will the defence be up to scratch?
Honduras may have conceded the fewest number of goals in the final CONCACAF round, but some they did let in were terrible. Goalkeeper Noel Valladares is good but inconsistent, and the central defensive pairing lacks international experience.

Which David Suazo will show up in the World Cup?
The Genoa striker was dismal during the qualifiers. He even managed to lose his starting spot to veteran Pavon and Birmingham City misfit Carlo Costly. He has the potential, but needs to show it when it matters most.

Reasons to be cheerful

The best generation ever
Honduras will be no pushovers. They have good players with European experience. And they fear no one.

A band of brothers
Not even the tense political situation in the country could divide the group. Their successful qualifying run has made the team bond like never before.

Excellent manager
Reinaldo Rueda is one of the best South American tacticians around and if anyone can get the best of this group of players it's him.

Reasons to be fearful

Lacking in world-class experience
Some of the players are in Europe's best leagues, but the national team hasn't faced the best of the best.

Needed...Valladares

A very tough group
Spain are as good as it gets, while Chile finished second in the South American qualifiers and Switzerland are an experienced European side. Fate could have been kinder on the Hondurans.

A very thin squad
The difference between the starters and the subs is huge. If Noel Valladares, Amado Guevara or Wilson Palacios get injured, their deputies will not be up to par.

ITALY

by Paddy Agnew

Golden oldies

An ageing *Azzurri* side have had a relatively easy ride en route to South Africa so far

Efficient...Gilardino (No11) celebrates scoring Italy's second goal

ON PAPER, ITALY were thoroughly emphatic winners of their qualifying group, finishing six points ahead of the Republic of Ireland in second and 10 clear of third-placed Bulgaria.

In reality, this was a typically low-key qualifying campaign in which Marcello Lippi's side were their usual efficient, rarely spectacular and sometimes fortunate selves.

The Italian pattern for the group was established in their opening qualifier, a 2-1 away win against Cyprus in September 2008. Suffice to say that Italy's best player on the night was goalkeeper Gigi Buffon, while their winning goal from Antonio Di Natale came against the run of play and in the 92nd minute.

One year later, this time away to Georgia, lady luck did her stuff again as match-rusty defender Kakha Kaladze turned the ball into his own net – not once but twice – for a 2-0 Italy win.

As was always predictable, it was Ireland manager Giovanni Trapattoni who gave Italy their biggest problems in the group, with a 1-1 draw in Bari and a 2-2 draw in Dublin. In Bari, luck was probably not with the Italians since striker Giampaolo Pazzini was sent off after only three minutes following a debatable decision by German referee Wolfgang Stark. However, fortune went the other way in the return, with Italy availing themselves of Irish ingenuity to grab a late equaliser at the end of a close fought game.

> **Lippi's Italy are a team that keeps on trucking, picking up the points as needed**

The point about Lippi's Italy is that this is a team that keeps on trucking, picking up the points as needed. It was significant, too, that when Italy came to arguably their most crucial qualifier, in Turin against Bulgaria last September, the *Azzurri* gave just about their best performance of the group in an emphatic 2-0 win.

That result took the pressure off the Italians when they travelled to Dublin for their next game because it had left them with a four-point lead over Ireland. Even more significant was the fact that, after a year in which he had been consistently criticised for sticking too loyally to his Germany 2006 squad, Lippi started with nine of them against Bulgaria.

The message was clear, and many of those same Germany 2006 heroes will start in South Africa. But the question remains: will they prove to be a winning combination of golden oldies or a dad's army that has gone one tournament too far? ●

For the record

QUALIFYING CAMPAIGN
EUROPE GROUP B

06.09.08	Cyprus-Italy	1-2
10.09.08	Italy-Georgia	2-0
11.10.08	Bulgaria-Italy	0-0
15.10.08	Italy-Montenegro	2-1
28.03.09	Montenegro-Italy	0-2
01.04.09	Italy-Republic of Ireland	1-1
05.09.09	Georgia-Italy	0-2
09.09.09	Italy-Bulgaria	2-0
10.10.09	Republic of Ireland-Italy	2-2
14.10.09	Italy-Cyprus	3-2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Italy (Q)	10	7	3	0	16	7	24
Rep of Ireland (P)	10	4	6	0	12	8	18
Bulgaria	10	3	5	2	17	13	14
Cyprus	10	2	3	5	14	16	9
Montenegro	10	1	6	3	9	14	9
Georgia	10	0	3	7	7	19	3

PLAYERS USED IN QUALIFIERS

NINE GAMES
Fabio CANNAVARO (810 mins), Gianluca ZAMBROTTA (810 mins), Daniele DE ROSSI (744 mins)

SEVEN
Gianluigi BUFFON (630 mins), Giorgio CHIELLINI (630 mins), Andrea PIRLO (533 mins), Antonio DI NATALE (481 mins), Simone PEPE (380 mins)

SIX
Mauro CAMORANESI (475 mins), Vincenzo IAQUINTA (431 mins), Alberto GILARDINO (414 mins)

FIVE
Fabio GROSSO (364 mins), Angelo PALOMBO (357 mins), Fabio QUAGLIARELLA (229 mins)

FOUR
Gennaro GATTUSO (314 mins), Andrea DOSSENA (274 mins), Giuseppe ROSSI (158 mins)

THREE
Luca TONI (133 mins), Gaetano D'AGOSTINO (106 mins)

TWO
Marco AMELIA (180 mins), Nicola LEGROTTAGLIE (180 mins), Alberto AQUILANI (155 mins), Davide SANTON (109 mins), Matteo BRIGHI (99 mins), Alessandro GAMBERINI (94 mins), Simone PERROTTA (47 mins), Giampaolo PAZZINI (34 mins)

ONE
Domenico CRISCITO (90 mins), Federico MARCHETTI (90 mins), Andrea BARZAGLI (86mins), Claudio MARCHISIO (73 mins), Marco CASSETTI (72 mins), Riccardo MONTOLIVO (68 mins), Marco MARCHIONNI (57 mins), Alessandro DEL PIERO (34 mins), Daniele BONERA (31 mins)

SCORERS IN QUALIFIERS

SIX GOALS
Alberto GILARDINO

TWO
Alberto AQUILANI, Daniele DE ROSSI, Antonio DI NATALE, Vincenzo IAQUINTA

ONE
Mauro CAMORANESI, Fabio GROSSO, Giampaolo PAZZINI, Andrea PIRLO

William HILL 12/1 to win the World Cup 33/1 Gilardino to be tournament top scorer

The key men

Marcello Lippi
A superb tactician and, above all, an inspirational motivator, he is quite simply one of the most gifted coaches in contemporary world football – and, what is more, he has already shown he knows how to win a World Cup.

Motivator...Lippi

Gianluigi Buffon
There were several occasions during the qualifying campaign when it was easy to understand why commentators insist on calling the 32-year-old the world's best goalkeeper.

Giorgio Chiellini
The central defender has become a foundation rock in this side – which is just as well considering that his defensive partner, 36-year-old captain Fabio Cannavaro, sometimes looks his age.

Creator...Pirlo

Andrea Pirlo
Italy's playmaker, the man who makes the side tick and an inventive midfielder of match-winning quality. If he is having a bad night, so too will Italy.

Midfield strength...De Rossi

Daniele De Rossi
More physically robust than Pirlo, he forms an ideal central midfield partnership with him that represents a fundamental element in the Italian side's make-up.

Rock solid...Chiellini

The unanswered questions

Could Lippi gamble on Totti?
With his team currently sometimes short on creative flair, Lippi will be greatly tempted to recall 33-year-old Roma talisman Francesco Totti from his self-imposed, post-Germany international retirement. Totti seems ready to return, but will he remain injury-free until June?

Will Nesta answer the call?
With his ageing defence looking occasionally wobbly, Lippi would dearly love to recall 33-year-old Alessandro Nesta, another who quit post Germany.

Worth a try...Amauri

Is Amauri an option?
At his best, Juventus' Brazil-born striker looks a perfect fit for this team. Out of sorts recently, will Amauri rediscover his best form or will Lippi opt instead for another Germany hero in Luca Toni?

Reasons to be cheerful

Experience
This squad has done it all before, four years ago, and despite the then-exploding Calciopoli match-fixing scandal.

Tradition
Italy are often there or thereabouts in big tournaments. Remember: they have played in three of the last seven World Cup Finals, winning two.

Weather and draw
The ageing Italian squad will benefit from playing in the South African winter rather than in searing heat, while the first round draw appears to have been kind to them.

Reasons to be fearful

Statistics
Winning back-to-back World Cups is not easy. Brazil were the last to do it, in 1962, though Italy themselves did do it back in 1938, admittedly in a very different era.

Too much experience
Lippi may well draft in younger players such as Domenico Criscito, Claudio Marchisio, Giuseppe Rossi and Antonio Candreva, but will he rely too heavily on his ageing Germany 2006 squad?

Defeat by Brazil
The ease with which Brazil beat Italy in the Confederations Cup in a 3-0 trouncing last summer does not augur well.

Nightmare...Italy crash

IVORY COAST

by Mark Gleeson

Another false dawn?

The sceptics are starting to wonder if it's too late for Drogba and co to make their mark on the international stage

In a muddle...Ivory Coast need to sort out their form and confidence in time for South Africa

THE IVORIANS MAY have been threatening to dominate the African football scene for some five years now, but despite a collection of established stars they will go to the World Cup in South Africa with a crisis of confidence.

Since missing out on the 2004 African Nations Cup finals, spurring drastic changes to their national team set-up and making the administration of their football federation more efficient, Ivory Coast have been tipped to become the continent's new power.

They were unlucky in 2006 not to win the continental championship, having been driven to the Final against hosts Egypt by the charisma and goals of Didier Drogba before, ironically, their captain missed the key penalty in a shoot-out.

Their maiden World Cup appearance the same year saw them eliminated after two successive defeats, but they left Germany with plaudits ringing in their ears after beating Serbia & Montenegro 3-2 in their last group game.

Coach Henri Michel departed after the tournament to hand over to Germany's Uli Stielike, who put together a formidable run of results but was unable to take charge of the team at the 2008 Nations Cup after the death of his son. Despite a caretaker coach, the Ivorians looked unbeatable in Ghana, racing to the semi-finals in devastating fashion, even with a half-fit Drogba, before suddenly imploding in the semi-final against Egypt, leaving yet another tournament with their obvious potential unfulfilled.

Qualifying for the 2010 World Cup proved a breeze as the side went unbeaten under new coach Vahid Halilhodzic and comfortably booked their trip to South Africa. It set them up as favourites for the 2010 Nations Cup in Angola – but, after beating Ghana to top their group, disaster struck again in the quarter-finals.

> **In the build-up to the 2010 World Cup, Ivory Coast will have to resist pushing the panic button**

Despite scoring an early goal and leading 2-1 with just seconds to go against Algeria, they contrived to somehow lose the match after extra time, limping out with their reputation in tatters.

Defensive frailties cost them ultimately, but the much-vaunted frontline did not impress either. Drogba's impact was minimal, Salomon Kalou was without focus, and Kader Keita and Bakary Kone did not get enough game time.

Now in the build-up to the 2010 World Cup, the Ivorians will have to resist pushing the panic button.

A tough draw against Brazil and Portugal was met with bravado initially, but now the tone from Abidjan is a lot less strident. ●

For the record

QUALIFYING CAMPAIGN
AFRICA ROUND 2, GROUP 7

01.06.08	Ivory Coast-Mozambique	1-0
08.06.08	Madagascar-Ivory Coast	0-0
14.06.08	Botswana-Ivory Coast	1-1
22.06.08	Ivory Coast-Botswana	4-0
07.09.08	Mozambique-Ivory Coast	1-1
11.10.08	Ivory Coast-Madagascar	3-0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast (Q)	6	3	3	0	10	2	12
Mozambique (Q)	6	2	2	2	7	5	8
Madagascar	6	1	3	2	2	7	6
Botswana	6	1	2	3	3	8	5

ROUND 3, GROUP E

29.03.09	Ivory Coast-Malawi	5-0
07.06.09	Guinea-Ivory Coast	1-2
20.06.09	Burkina Faso-Ivory Coast	2-3
05.09.09	Ivory Coast-Burkina Faso	5-0
10.10.09	Malawi-Ivory Coast	1-1
14.11.09	Ivory Coast-Guinea	3-0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast (Q)	6	5	1	0	19	4	16
Burkina Faso	6	4	0	2	10	11	12
Malawi	6	1	1	4	4	11	4
Guinea	6	1	0	5	7	14	3

PLAYERS USED IN QUALIFIERS
TWELVE GAMES
Didier ZOKORA (1,080 mins), Emmanuel EBOUE (1,003 mins)
ELEVEN
Boubacar BARRY (990 mins)
TEN
Siaka TIENE (740 mins)
NINE
Kolo TOURE (791 mins)
EIGHT
Arthur BOKA (720 mins), Salomon KALOU (628 mins), Boubacar SANOGO (552 mins), Sekou CISSE (279 mins)
SEVEN
Guy DEMEL (590 mins), Yaya TOURE (543 mins), Emmanuel KONE (390 mins)
SIX
Abdoulaye MEITE (485 mins), Kanga AKALE (334 mins), Emerse FAE (244 mins)
FIVE
Bakary KONE (421 mins), Didier DROGBA (368 mins), Souleymane BAMBA (283 mins)
FOUR
ROMARIC (336 mins)
THREE
Igor LOLO (224 mins), Kader KEITA (181 mins), Marc ZORO (115 mins), GERVINHO (113 mins), Kandia TRAORE (80 mins)
TWO
Jean-Jacques GOSSO (110 mins), Benjamin ANGOUA (94 mins)
ONE
Aristide ZOGBO (90 mins), Arouna DINDANE (82 mins), Seydou DOUMBIA (12 mins), Kafoumba COULIBALY (2 mins)

SCORERS IN QUALIFIERS
SIX GOALS
Didier DROGBA
THREE
Sekou CISSE, Bakary KONE, Boubacar SANOGO
TWO
GERVINHO, Salomon KALOU, ROMARIC, Yaya TOURE
ONE
Kader KEITA, Abdoulaye MEITE, Siaka TIENE, Didier ZOKORA

William HILL 28/1 to win the World Cup 12/1 to reach semi-finals

The key men

Way ahead...high-scoring Drogba

Didier Drogba
Arguably the world's top striker, he is a charismatic leader whose stats at international level speak for themselves, with more than 40 goals in some 65 games.

Yaya Toure
The giant midfielder is the axis of the team, providing the link with a formidable attack and cover for an inconsistent defence. Having travelled extensively at club level, he is now settled at Barcelona.

Kolo Toure
A product of the fabled ASEC Abidjan academy, he is prone to the occasional rush of blood, but still commands much respect among his team-mates.

Stopper...Kolo Toure

Didier Zokora
The midfield rock with his tough tackling style. Played in Belgium and England before moving to Sevilla, and remains one of the Ivorians' most consistent performers.

Poacher...Kalou

Salomon Kalou
Tried to play for Holland at the last World Cup but was stymied in his bid for a passport. Eventually settled for a berth in the Ivory Coast line-up, where his elder brother was once captain.

Axis power...Yaya Toure runs midfield

The unanswered questions

Ivorian Firepower...(from left to right) Sanogo, Drogba and Kalou

Are they stuck in another 'group of death'?
Four years ago the Ivorians had Argentina and Holland as first-round opponents, and fate has not been kind to them this time as they were drawn with hot favourites Brazil and the fast-improving Portugal.

Is their strike force the best in Africa?
The Chelsea pair of Didier Drogba and Salomon Kalou are backed up by Bakary Kone from Marseille and Kader Keita, now at Galatasaray. Boubacar Sanogo and new find Seydou Doumbia, who scored against Germany in November, are alternatives.

Is there enough depth in the squad?
There might be a few household names in the team but there are also key positions where the talent is decidedly mediocre. It is said a championship-winning side always needs a good goalkeeper and this, for a start, is where the Elephants are lacking.

Reasons to be cheerful

Midfield bite
Stripping the opposition of possession is a strong point of the Ivorian game, led by Didier Zokora and Yaya Toure – two of the tougher players in the African game.

Stuck in...Zokora (right)

The Drogba effect
There is no doubt the form of the team ebbs and flows on the back of Didier Drogba's leadership and contribution. If he is up for a good World Cup, the captain has the potential to carry the side almost single-handedly into the knockout phase.

Second time lucky
Having made their debut four years ago, when they looked like rabbits in the headlights, there will be less naivety this time.

Reasons to be fearful

African Nations Cup hangover
A poor showing in Angola in January brought to the fore many of the frailties that were not exposed by the lightweight opposition the Ivorians breezed past in their World Cup qualifiers.

Confidence in the coach
Vahid Halilhodzic's relationship with his team appeared to sour after their surprise 3-2 loss to Algeria in the African Nations Cup quarter-final. The Bosnian suggested he might quit after a stinging condemnation of his team's fighting spirit.

Lack of belief
The Ivorians ought to enjoy pitting their skills against Portugal and Brazil, but will they be in a positive frame of mind?

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OUTRIGHT BETTING

9/2	Spain	28/1	Ivory Coast	80/1	Nigeria	200/1	South Korea
5/1	Brazil	28/1	Portugal	80/1	USA	200/1	Switzerland
5/1	England	40/1	Chile	100/1	Uruguay	250/1	Algeria
9/1	Argentina	50/1	Paraguay	125/1	Australia	250/1	Japan
12/1	Germany	66/1	Ghana	125/1	Denmark	250/1	Slovakia
12/1	Italy	66/1	Serbia	125/1	South Africa	750/1	Honduras
14/1	France	80/1	Cameroon	150/1	Greece	1000/1	New Zealand
14/1	Holland	80/1	Mexico	200/1	Slovenia	2000/1	North Korea

Each way one-half the odds a place 1, 2.

TOP GOALSCORER

9/1	F. Torres	25/1	K. Benzema	33/1	K. J. Huntelaar	40/1	S. Gerrard
9/1	D. Villa	25/1	J. Defoe	33/1	Kaka	40/1	M. Gomez
12/1	L. Fabiano	25/1	T. Henry	33/1	F. Lampard	40/1	D. Milito
12/1	C. Ronaldo	25/1	G. Higuain	33/1	L. Podolski	40/1	Robinho
12/1	W. Rooney	25/1	M. Klose	40/1	Adriano	50/1	C. Fabregas
20/1	S. Aguero	28/1	R. van Persie	40/1	N. Anelka	50/1	Pato
20/1	L. Messi	33/1	D. Drogba	40/1	M. Ballack	50/1	C. Tevez
20/1	Nilmar	33/1	A. Gilardino	40/1	S. Eto'o	66/1	D. Kuyt

Please note this is not the FIFA Golden Boot award. Dead Heat Rules Apply. Each way one-quarter the odds a place 1, 2, 3, 4. Other players on requet.

GROUP BETTING

GROUP A		GROUP B		GROUP C		GROUP D	
5/6	France	4/9	Argentina	3/10	England	4/5	Germany
19/5	Mexico	4/1	Nigeria	9/2	USA	7/2	Serbia
19/5	Uruguay	8/1	Greece	10/1	Slovenia	4/1	Ghana
6/1	S. Africa	9/1	S. Korea	16/1	Algeria	7/1	Australia

GROUP E		GROUP F		GROUP G		GROUP H	
4/6	Holland	4/9	Italy	4/7	Brazil	1/4	Spain
7/2	Cameroon	13/5	Paraguay	10/3	Portugal	5/1	Chile
9/2	Denmark	8/1	Slovakia	7/2	Ivory Coast	17/2	Switzerland
9/1	Japan	40/1	N. Zealand	80/1	North Korea	28/1	Honduras

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